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Persistence and Lived Experiences of Doctoral Students at a Hispanic Serving Institution

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PERSISTENCE AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS

AT A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

A Dissertation

by

JACOB M. CAMACHO

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ABSTRACT

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137 references.

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the
completion of Ph.D. and Ed.D. degrees and identify obstacles to completion at a Hispanic
Serving Institution.   Low completion rates are a national and a global problem predicted
to generate a critical shortage of professionals needed by society. The researcher utilized
a phenomenological qualitative study to research the phenomenon through the
interpretation of an individual's experiences in various situations (Stake, 2010; Yin,
2003). Low completion rates are a widespread issue that is expected to result in a
significant lack of professionals required by society. This research is important as it aims
to find the factors that contribute to or impede dissertation completion. This research
focused on doctoral students' experiences as they persisted through coursework and other
milestones in their respective programs. Tinto's theoretical model of persistence is
frequently utilized in research to examine student retention and attrition. Tinto (1975)
emphasizes that student engagement in both the social and intellectual environments is
crucial for completing a degree.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is a wealth of information on students who earn their Ph.D. from national databases like the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) and students who start but never finish their Ph.D.. There is an alarming statistic when discussing graduate student degree completion. Online discussion board Quara (2019) states that a quarter of Ph.D. students drop out before finishing their degree. This number varies by department, college, and country. Doctoral (Ph.D.) student dropout rates in the United States are roughly fifty percent for residential programs (Pittman, 2003; Fiore, 2019) and even more significant for online programs, 50-70 percent (Rigler et al., 2011, as cited in Terrel et al. 2012). This leaves almost half of the students who began a program and still need to complete their intended degree, equating to a loss of approximately 40,000 doctoral students annually across all disciplines (Gardner, 2008; Girves & Wemmerus, 1998).

Leijen et al. (2016) Maloshonok et al.(2019) & Willis et al. (2011) listed numerous justifications for not completing a doctoral degree. Studies found that doctoral student attrition includes (a) procrastination (Green, 1997; Kluever, 1997), (b) low researcher self-efficacy (Faghihi et al., 1999), (c) finances (Abedi & Benkin, 1987; Bair & Haworth, 2004; Girves & Wemmerus, 1988), (d) poor advisor relationship (Ferrer De

Valero, 2001; & Hart-Baldridge, 2018), (e) low integration level with faculty (Golde, 2000; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Lovitts, 2001), (f) low integration level with peers (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Lovitts, 2001), and (g) incongruence between student goals and program focus (Bair & Haworth, 2004; Golde, 2005; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Lovitts, 2001). (as cited in Willis & Carmichael, 2011, p. 193).

Hoskin and Goldberg (2005) examined student and program matches using a qualitative research approach. They found three types: "(a) the social-personal match between the student and his or her peers, (b) the social-personal match between the student and the faculty, and (c) the academic match that entails the congruence of the student's goals with the program's focus." (p. 179). Institutions must establish an atmosphere of success for graduate students to succeed. An institution's doctoral program completion rates measure the relevance of the graduate program; it would then stand to reason that students would not be committed to an institution if it had a low completion rate (Bain et al., 2011; Grasso et al., 2007).

Torka et al., (2020) studied the Ph.D. completion rates from 2005 to 2018 in Australia. His research found that Ph.D. completion rates needed to be examined to guide change in doctoral education in Australia and globally. Torka et al., (2020) states that there is a need for reliable data because completion rates and times direct the allocation of funds, comparing and restructuring doctoral programs. There has been a push for governance by numbers and trust in numbers, and higher education policies hope to create and use more trustworthy data sets to improve Ph.D. completion rates (Grasso et al., 2007).

Bain et al. (2011) stated that retention and graduation rates in graduate school were more challenging to identify and predict. Studies are identifying what factors lead students to exit programs (Leijen et al., 2016), as well as barriers to completing a doctoral degree such as completing a dissertation (King & Williams, 2014), employment (Bekova, 2021), institutional factors (Castelló et al., 2017; Skopek et al., 2020). However, this study will rely on Tinto's (1975) theory of persistence to identify the successful internal and external factors influencing doctoral students' persistence toward program completion at an HSI.   Tinto's (1975) original model posited a direct relationship between the college or university environment and student retention rates. The model suggests that students who can effectively integrate into the new institutional context are likelier to persist in their studies and experience social success within the environment (Tinto, 1975). When an institution understands and provides what is most helpful to students, it increases a program's value (Dixon, 2016). A degree shows that doctoral students are highly driven and self-motivated (Gitt et al., 2018; Pyhältö et al., 2020). Having a Ph.D. makes individuals highly marketable in the academic environment as well as in the corporate world (Campbell et al., 2005; Choe & Borrego, 2020; Heflinger & Doykos, 2016)

When students push themselves towards completing a degree and experience the "dissertation wall," they tend to resign or lose their drive. Lovitts (2001) states, a dropout is someone who leaves the program, in this case, graduate school. She defines a stop-out as a student who does not re-enroll with the intent of returning once the cause of the hiatus has diminished. She goes on to state that in some cases, it may be financial support, familial support, or a change in the work.

This dissertation contains subsections where the problem statement is described, the need of the study outlines the gaps in the literature by looking at research studies before the 1970s until the present time, and the purpose of the study is to describe factors hindering and contributing to persistence in doctoral degree completion at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI).

Limited information is available regarding graduate students who did not complete their master's or doctoral degrees (Gururaj et al., 2010). The investigation into the factors contributing to graduate students' non-completion of their degree holds significance for the individuals pursuing higher education (Bain et al., 2011; Grasso et al., 2007) and the educational institutions involved. One perspective posits that an institution's reputation is affected when it experiences low completion rates. According to existing research, prospective students may harbor skepticism about the college and its academic offerings, perhaps negatively impacting its recruitment figures and financial performance. The findings of this research can potentially support educational administrators in strategically allocating resources to address the specific needs of Ph.D. and Ed.D. students, particularly those enrolled in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

Tinto's theories regarding student departure, specifically the interactive model of student departure, are widely recognized as a significant contribution to understanding how students get integrated into the academic community. These theories also shed light on how student engagement influences their decision to continue their studies or discontinue their education (Tinto, 1975, 1987).

Statement of the Problem

Graduate programs face a challenge concerning the rates at which students complete their degrees or drop out, which can adversely affect students' educational experiences, resulting in reduced effectiveness, financial burden, and failure to obtain a degree. The attrition rates of doctoral students in the United States range from approximately 40% to 60% (Burger, 2018; Cassuto, 2013; Pittman, 2003; Sowell et al., 2015).

According to the findings of Mendoza et al. (2014), it has been anticipated that approximately 2 million job positions in the United States will necessitate the attainment of a master's, doctorate, or professional degree (Wendler et al., 2010). From a societal perspective, individuals pursue a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree to acquire information, attain a more profound understanding of a particular subject, and enhance their circumstances (5 Reasons to Get a Ph.D., 2021; Berger, et al., 2012; Demetriou, et al., 2018; Kircher, 2018).

Wellington and Sikes (2006) found that students' motivations were classified into three main categories: extrinsic, intrinsic and professional continuation. The first extrinsic group consisted of individuals at the beginning of their professions who viewed the degree to start their professional journey and as a factor for advancing their jobs and achieving rapid promotion. The other extrinsic type included professionals who had become more established and viewed the doctorate as a form of professional advancement, occasionally benefiting their career progression. Individuals in the intrinsic motivation group were often experienced in their careers and had largely joined for personal fulfillment and intellectual stimulation (Wellington & Sikes, 2006).

Burton (2020) found that educators are contractually and morally required to continue their professional growth. Through her study, she found that the participants decided to pursue a doctorate in teaching to fulfill the need for professional development. Her research found that technical advancement, professional learning quality, peer collaboration, and support were the focus (Burton, 2020).

From the institutional perspective, attrition heavily impacts institutional operations and finance (Bain et al., 2011; Cassuto, 2013; Castelló et al., 2017). The funding formula determines how state tax money is dispersed to higher education institutions (Mckeown-Moak, 1999; Pinkard et al., 2022). The methodology would reward institutions that support the state's higher education goals (Pinkard et al., 2022). Institutions then suffer a financial loss and, at some point, a loss of program validation (Levesque, 2018).

Need for the Study

Studies before 1970 focused on the characteristics of individual students rather than on the interactions between doctoral students and the institution (Bayer, 1968; Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Marks, 1967; Panos & Astin, 1968, Summerskill, 1962). Attrition was previously focused strictly on the student's characteristics, personal attributes, and shortcomings (Spady, 1970, 1971; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 2012). During the 1980s, there was an increase in the prevalence of studies focused on academic advisement among undergraduate students (Glennen, 1985). In the United States, the attainment of leadership and positions of power necessitates the completion of professional school or graduate studies. Given the escalating emphasis on post-secondary education, it is anticipated that the educational sector will witness a heightened need for

faculty and administrators who possess Ph.D. qualifications (Pauley, et al., 1999). Therefore, the phenomenon of doctorate student attrition has implications for the replacement of teachers and administrators in higher education. The investigation of attrition in doctorate programs is of paramount importance, as demonstrated by the findings of Pauley et al. (1999). This is primarily because the expenses incurred in the areas of admissions, advising, planning, and program implementation for individuals who do not complete their doctoral studies contribute to a significant share of the overall expenditures associated with conducting a doctoral degree program.

According to Bair et al (2004), much research has been conducted to investigate the factors influencing students' decisions to withdraw from or persist in Ph.D. programs. However, there has been a limited amount of comprehensive study conducted in relation to the scope of schools and programs examined. Recent research in the field of doctoral degree attainment has mostly concentrated on investigating the various elements that influence and facilitate the successful completion of doctoral degrees (McCray & Joseph-Richard, 2020).

According to Bartelse, et al. (2007) and Elliot et al. (2020), it has been observed that certain students who opt to undertake a doctoral degree may lack awareness of the extensive and intricate realm of academia, as well as the requisite support mechanisms essential for successful completion. The interaction between the official curriculum and the hidden curriculum has a crucial role in both academic achievement and personal development, as highlighted by Elliot et al. (2020). Students sometimes face various challenges and hardships in pursuit of their education, including the need to relocate their families, incur financial obligations, and invest emotionally in their academic endeavors.

Failure to complete their education can have detrimental effects on individuals, leading to psychological and familial difficulties, as well as a significant financial burden with limited prospects for job advancement (Council for Graduate Schools, 2008). The current body of scholarly work concerning attrition among Ph.D. students is constrained due to its predominant focus on small samples of students who have already left their programs, relying on their retrospective recall of factors that contributed to their departure (Ruud et al., 2018). Contemporary scholarly investigations pertaining to attrition among graduate students mostly center on individuals who have prematurely withdrawn from their academic programs prior to completion (Thomas, 2017) . The study conducted by Ruud et al. (2018) examines the factors that have led individuals to contemplate leaving, identifies the specific events or circumstances that have acted as a catalyst for their decision, and explores the experiences that ultimately prompted them to depart. The existing body of research on degree completion among Hispanic students at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) is scarce.

Purpose of the Study

This study's objective is to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of the elements that contribute to the persistence of students in successfully completing different doctoral degrees. The study provides a thorough examination of the various factors that contribute to doctoral students' persistence in successfully completing their degrees. This involves identifying and analyzing the elements that support students throughout their doctoral journey, such as institutional support, mentorship, financial resources, personal motivation, and academic preparedness.

Specifically focusing on a Hispanic Serving Institution, the study seeks to identify and understand the obstacles or challenges that have hindered students' persistence in completing a Ph.D. degree. These factors could include cultural barriers, lack of representation or support networks, financial constraints, language barriers, or institutional policies that may disproportionately affect underrepresented minority students. By addressing both the facilitating factors and barriers to persistence, the study aims to provide insights that can inform interventions, policies, and support systems to enhance doctoral students' success and completion rates, particularly within the context of Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the researcher in the conduct of this study.

1. What are the most important factors contributing to persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?
2. What are the most important factors hindering persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?

Significance of the Study

In terms of sheer numbers, the attrition problem deserves the attention of those interested in and affiliated with institutions of higher education (Bain et al., 2011; Cassuto, 2013). Understanding why students do not finish their graduate degree is not only important to the student (Bain et al 2011) but to the institution as well. One view is that the institution's reputation is impacted when it has low completion rates. Their research states that potential students may doubt the college and its programs, which may

in turn impact recruiting numbers leading to their bottom dollar. Ever since the 1980s colleges and universities often lack systems to follow the progress of graduate students at the institution (Bair & Haworth, 2004; Zlatarov et al., 2019).

Little is known of the graduate students who did not persist through to master's or doctoral degree attainment (Gururaj et al., 2010). Understanding why students are leaving or not finishing their graduate studies will strengthen not only the student but also the program's credentials. With students leaving or rather not finishing for various reasons, it is easier to place the blame on the student for not being able to maintain the level of drive it takes to finish. This study may help educational leaders plan and allocate appropriate resources in areas of need for doctoral students, especially in HSIs.

This qualitative study has the potential to gain an in-depth understanding of what factors contribute to or hinder degree completion in doctoral students in HSIs. Educational leaders at HSIs may gain some knowledge related to doctoral degree completion and can therefore implement supportive practices for doctoral students.

Overview of Theoretical Framework

The study will be grounded in Tinto's (1993) theory of student persistence, which has been widely used as a framework for understanding and addressing the issue of student retention in higher education. Tinto's theory posits that students demonstrate persistence when they successfully integrate both academically and socially into the college environment (Tinto, 1975). This integration involves active participation in academic activities as well as engagement in social interactions within the institution.

Research in the field of higher education, including Reason (2009) and Anderson (1981), has highlighted the importance of student persistence and retention,

emphasizing the role of satisfaction and integration in college success. Satisfaction, as defined by Anderson (1981), is closely linked to college integration, which is seen as essential for student retention. The idea is that students who actively participate in academic and social activities within the institution are more likely to persist and complete their degrees (Astin, 1975).

Tinto (1987) further developed his retention theory by incorporating social and intellectual integration, building upon Durkheim's solidarity theory. This expanded framework strengthens the understanding of factors influencing student persistence, emphasizing the importance of both social and academic integration for student success.

By utilizing Tinto's theory as its theoretical foundation, the study aims to explore how social and academic integration influence the persistence of doctoral students, particularly within the context of a Hispanic Serving Institution. It will attempt to investigate the extent to which students' engagement in academic and social activities contributes to their likelihood of completing a Ph.D. degree.

Overview of Methodology

A phenomenological case study was used to gather in-depth information about the factors that contribute to doctoral students' persistence in completing a doctoral degree and the factors hindering the persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution. A phenomenological case study is appropriate when the goal of research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in each situation (Creswell, 2016; Stake, 2010). In a phenomenological case study such as this one the bonded system is the university's doctoral programs. The study is limited by time and location, following the recommendations of Creswell (2013) and

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Yin (2003), to ensure a concentrated investigation inside a particular time and geographic setting.

This study used a phenomenological case study to investigate a certain group of persons who have comparable experiences within a restricted geographical area. Creswell (2013) highlighted that this technique focuses on recognizing and comprehending a specific phenomenon within a specified context. It focuses on the real-life experiences of Ph.D. and Ed.D. students at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) located near the border between Texas and Mexico.

Definitions of Terms

All But Dissertations (ABD) - you have completed all required doctorate coursework, but have not written and defended your dissertation.

Attrition – The reduction in the number of students attending courses as time goes by.

Drop out – Someone who doesn't finish a project or program, especially school.

Early Exit - A student that leaves the program within the first two years (Maher et al, 2020)

Ed.D. – A professional degree designed for practitioners pursuing, for example, education leadership roles.

Hidden Curriculum – the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school

JD – a Juris Doctor Degree, is an academic credential that paves the way for a career as a lawyer.

Non-returning – a student who chooses not to re-enroll for another semester, despite not graduating and/or transferring.

Official Curriculum -The way curriculum itself has been traditionally understood; as the course of study, body of courses, or program of training at a school or university.

Opt out – To choose not to participate in something.

Persistence – Continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any institution.

PH.D. – A person holding a Doctor of Philosophy degree in any discipline except medicine, or sometimes theology. Prepares graduates for research and teaching roles.

Returning - a student who re-enrolls after a break in enrollment of one or more semesters.

Stop out – A student who withdraws from enrollment at a college or university for a period of time.

Student retention – This is measured in return rates from one year to another among students.

Transfer out – A student who moves from one institution or course to another at the same level.

Chapter I Summary

This phenomenological case study examined the perspectives and lived experiences of graduate students at a HSI in deep south Texas. According to Creswell (2013), A phenomenological case study is an investigative approach where the researcher identifies the fundamental nature of human experiences regarding a situation, as described by the participants. During this procedure, the researcher deliberately separates or excludes their own personal experiences in order to comprehend the experiences of the subjects included in the study (Creswell, 2013). The researcher collected data in the form of interviews to find common themes and unique perspectives of doctoral students that were course complete and categorized as All But Dissertation. The researcher will

provide a thorough examination of the various factors that contribute to doctoral students' persistence in successfully completing their degrees. This involves identifying and analyzing the elements that support students throughout their doctoral journey, such as institutional support, mentorship, financial resources, personal motivation, and academic preparedness.

Chapter two of this dissertation includes a review of literature for persistence of doctoral students at a HSI. The researcher utilized Tinto's theory of persistence academic integration as its theoretical foundation (Tinto, 1975, 1975; Astin, 1975; Anderson, 1981). The study aims to explore how social and academic integration influence the persistence of doctoral students, particularly within the context of a Hispanic Serving Institution. It will investigate the extent to which students' engagement in academic and social activities contributes to their likelihood of completing a Ph.D. degree.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW LITERATURE

The search for my literature began with a systematic search for the causes of graduate student attrition and produced a whirlwind of variables to consider. I identified these overarching themes to focus on: the graduate student, student persistence, and institutional role. Boolean operators were used to combine phrases and words to glean through several databases for relevant literature to my research topic. My searches turned up plenty of literature for undergraduate attrition and systems to support this population, it highlighted the need for an explanation for doctoral student attrition rates.

Doctoral education can be credited for many scientific, literary, and intellectual achievements, and those that grant doctoral degrees are considered the highest quality in the world (Sowell et al., 2015). Data collected through the Council of Graduate Schools state that although doctoral students in the United States have been finishing their degrees at a faster rate since 1983, only about 30% of those who pursue a doctoral degree finish (Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service, 2010). Students leave without finishing graduate school for various reasons. Attrition, or a gradual decrease in students is attributed to avoidable and unavoidable circumstances. Understanding graduate retention and drop-out rates is of great importance to higher education institutions, students, and graduate programs (Berger et al., 2012; Cassuto, 2013). There is plenty of research conducted on undergraduate programs but not enough on graduate

programs. Cooke et al. (1995) state "Although much is known about undergraduate student attrition in the United States, very little is known about graduate student attrition" (as cited in Bain et al., 2011, p. 2).

"Fewer studies have been conducted about the personal experiences of dropped-out doctoral students reporting on their explanations for not continuing their postgraduate studies" (Leijen et al., 2014, p. 130). These studies would help to further explain and better understand why students fail to complete their doctoral studies and help higher education institutions instill better support systems and measures to increase the effectiveness of doctoral studies (Bartelse, et al., 2007; Godskesen & Kobayashi, 2016; Leijen et al., 2014).

Researchers found that doctoral students who left the program before completing their degree listed social, cultural, and institutional factors as influencers to completion (Castelló et al., 2017; Devos et al., 2017). Devos et al. (2017) also found when students were not able to socially integrate, academic integration became more difficult.

Theoretical Framework

This study will utilize Tinto's (1993) theory of student persistence as its theoretical foundation. Student persistence is a leading concern in higher education (Reason, 2009). Students demonstrate persistence when they successfully integrate academically and socially into the college environment (Astin, 1975; Anderson, 1981; Tinto, 1975). Multiple research papers have examined student retention and departure using Tinto's theoretical model of persistence. According to Tinto's (1975) theory, participation by students in both the social and academic environments is essential for degree completion. According to Anderson (1981), satisfaction is defined as the process of integrating

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oneself into college. Sociology has traditionally linked satisfaction and integration to retention. According to the idea, a student's college withdrawal is inversely related to direct participation in the institution's academic and social activities (Astin 1975). Tinto (1987) added social and intellectual integration to Durkheim's solidarity theory to strengthen his retention theory. Institutional regulations govern organizational factors. Durkheim (1951) examines the degree to which students participate in collective values and receive support from their peers.

Graduate Student Academic Preparedness

Decker (1973) outlined characteristics of successful doctoral Ph.D. candidates such as the quality of training a student receives as an undergraduate student, the quality of undergraduate instruction, and how it impacts the quality of graduate faculty. Decker (1973) found that students with the highest success rates completed their undergraduate studies in what his studies deemed as "good" domestic schools.

Letchford and Wendlandt (2009) interviewed 17 Yale science graduate students to gain an understanding of their experience when transitioning to graduate school. One student interviewed stated her graduate experience did not fit what she envisioned as an undergraduate student and almost all stated they were misinformed about the realities of research. They discovered that many of the interviewees listed the challenging transition as a cause for them to leave scientific research. In their study, however, eight professors and administrators state that attrition is normal across graduate programs instead of a disconnect. The researchers found several professors agreed that preparation for graduate students in the sciences began as a mentee with exposure to research at the undergraduate level where they can get a sense of what graduate school would be like. Mentors guide

their undergraduate independent research as well as the graduate school application and selection process. They go on to explain that while the research was good preparation for graduate school, many facets of graduate school could not be replicated at the undergraduate level. Their experiences in the lab only helped them become acquainted with the day-to-day lab work but did not prepare them for the rigorous level of graduate-level work (Letchford, & Wendlandt, 2009). Although, this research did not focus doctoral graduate students, considering quality and exposures at a previous level of education may be of importance.

The research conducted by Lovitts (2001), expands upon previous studies on student attrition, including the work of Vincent Tinto. In his seminal work on undergraduate attrition, Tinto (1993) provided the initial framework for a theory on doctoral student attrition. The author contended that the concept of doctorate student attrition, similar to undergraduate attrition and retention, is most effectively comprehended as the interplay between the student and the educational institution (Cabrera et al., 1992; Tinto, 1993). Tinto's idea emphasizes the importance of integrating Ph.D. students into both the discipline and the department. Lovitts (2001) expands upon Tinto's approach, stating that academic integration is crucial for doctorate students, whereas social integration, which is significant for undergraduates, does not directly contribute to doctoral attrition (Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001). Tinto, Lovitts, and Golde all highlight the educational communities that influence the doctorate students' experience. According to Tinto (1993), the educational community that is most important for undergraduate students is their institution. However, Tinto argues that graduate students' persistence is influenced by both local and national factors to a greater extent than

undergraduate students. The academic department serves as the local representation of a broader field, making it both local and national in scope (Malpshonok et al., 2007). A variable found to have substantial impact is cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu (1973) states cultural capital is social assets attained in childhood that affect social mobility and are attained from parents, peers, and other social environments (cited in Peteet & Lige, 2016). They go on to state that these forms of social capital can include education, knowledge, style of speech, and other specialized skills that may be of benefit to students in terms of teacher-student interactions, recommendations, and career opportunities. Letchford et al (2020) suggests that academic preparedness should start at the undergraduate level, with students being mentored by faculty and graduate students. They also recommend providing GRE preparation support and research experience with a graduate student mentor. In terms of funding, they propose that departments should allocate resources for diversity initiatives. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of establishing local and national associations to ensure sustainable financial support and to shape program design and execution. Lastly, they highlight the need for cultural diversity among administrators, faculty, and students to promote inclusivity within institutions.

Their research concluded that intervention programs that target academic preparation along with building cultural capital were critical to increasing the diversity of graduate students. They also noted that cultural engagement programs that build cultural capital while appreciating the importance of diverse students and their experiences are needed to show that their experiences are valuable. They also found that students benefit from reclaiming the value of their cultural heritage. Some examples of cultural engagement included activities such as service learning, integrated community

components, shadowing diverse professionals, professional presentations from diverse stakeholders, and cultural excursions (Peete & Lige, 2016).

Minority Graduate Students

Underrepresented minority students have not participated in doctoral education at the same rate as peers (Sowell et al., 2015). Research suggests that student debt, insufficient guidance, and limited knowledge of the application process are possible deterrents for Hispanic students aspiring to pursue graduate degrees (Burger, 2018; Fleming et al., 2014). Fleming et al. (2014) state family and cultural values may also be contributors significantly impacting Hispanic student representation in postgraduate education.

College completion has important benefits to individuals and society, including job satisfaction, civic engagement, individual labor market access, and, ultimately, the nation's economic growth and global competitiveness (DeAngelo et al., 2011). Currently, the inequalities in postsecondary and college completion rates highlight the need for higher education stakeholders to design initiatives aimed at increasing participation and ameliorating racial disparities.

Despite the substantial increase in the number of racial-ethnic minorities enrolled in higher education following the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, college completion rates of minorities continue to lag behind those of white students (Melguizo, 2008). The National Center for Education Statistics (Musu-Gillette, et al., 2016), found that in the early 1970s, only one-fourth of minorities ages 18-24 enrolled in college compared to over one-third of Whites. This difference in undergraduate enrollment rates had diminished substantially within two decades; by 1992, 39.4% of African Americans

and 36.5% of Hispanics enrolled in college, compared to 43.2% of Whites (Hudson et al. 2005). Tate (2017) states that altogether 54.8 percent of students who entered graduate programs completed their degree, but broken down by race and ethnicity, those rates fluctuated by up to 25 percent. Tate's 2017 report found that white and Asian students have program completion rates of 62 percent and 63.2 percent, respectively -- while Hispanic and Black students graduated at rates of 45.8 percent and 38 percent, respectively. Tate (2017) found that of the 322,205 Hispanic students polled after 6 years, 35 percent were no longer enrolled, 19.2 percent were enrolled, 10.2 percent had completed their degree at a different institution, and only 35.6 percent completed their degree at their starting institution. An alarming 64.4 percent attrition rate compared to a 56.6 percent overall attrition rate (Tate, 2017).

Student Well-being

In a study by Nielsen et al. (2017) the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework was employed to investigate how instructor support influences the subjective well-being of postgraduate business students through the development of their psychological resources of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism (psychological capital (PsyCap)). The study found that when students face academic setbacks, something as simple as an instructor's advice and encouragement will allow the student to persevere with the task and put the setback behind them. The provision of encouragement and material resources in the form of advice and information by the instructor will lead students to feel confident in their ability to do well in their studies and cope with the demands of university work, therefore leading to higher levels of self-efficacy (Nielsen et al., 2017). The positive psychological state of development

(characterized by the four PsyCap resources of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience) that is elicited by instructor support, will in turn lead students to experience higher levels of subjective well-being (Nielsen et al., 2017).

Leijen et al. (2014) focused on four factors related to Ph.D. students' persistence in their study: motivation, goal-directedness, positive self-concept, and well-being. In addition to these four factors, Lovitts (2001) found three other contributing factors to degree completion, such as intelligence, knowledge (formal and informal), and thinking style (cited in Leijen et al., 2014). Lack of effective thinking, poor planning skills, and inability to write are considered reasons why doctoral students do not finish their post-graduate studies, as they were not prepared for doctoral-level learning (Leijen et al., 2014; Letchford et al., 2020; Maloshonok et al., 2019).

McKinzie et al. (2006) looked at issues of psychology graduate students beyond their dissertation research. The researchers found that graduate students were faced with stressors such as increased academic demands, limited federal financial support, and emotional or psychological pressure. This stress led to several changes in personal characteristics and daily habits for many thousands of graduate students. Their quantitative study explored the relationship between stress, mood, self-esteem, and daily habits for psychology graduate students. They studied 65 psychology graduate students enrolled at two New York City universities. The sample consisted of 49 women and 16 men ranging in age from 22 to 49 years. These students were evenly distributed from first through fourth-year graduate students and enrolled in various programs. They define stress as the response to threats or challenges in the environment and eustress as a beneficial psychological stress. They go on to state that while positive stress can

motivate students to reach their potential, excessive stress can lead to modest results. The researchers found that the origin of stress occurred when individuals attempt to project an image of self-control as a way to cope with stress from a lack of control of their academic environment such as degree completion timeline, types of courses taken, evaluations by supervisors, and professors, or options to select internships and externships (McKinzie et al., 2006). They state that as many as one-third to one-half of graduate students either drop out or contemplate exiting the program before degree completion due to these stresses mentioned.

Edwards et al. (2019) found that there is a need to prepare graduate students to cope with the many challenges inherent in twenty-first-century society such as unemployment, substance abuse, mental illness, increased cultural and economic diversity, and interpersonal conflict. Efforts to support student development and promote resilience, such as, social and emotional learning (SEL) were found to be viable solutions (Edwards et al., 2019). They define SEL as a process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors.

SEL is typically implemented in school settings with children entering preschool through graduation to develop students who are knowledgeable, caring, and responsible citizens. Many of the core principles and practices of SEL could be used to support graduate students to enhance their well-being as well as their academic performance. The authors continue that graduate student well-being is an issue that has not been explored much and has just recently begun to receive significant attention. They found that most graduate students find graduate school stressful, and many students are at risk of

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developing mental health issues.   Several factors contribute to this environment such as academic culture, fear of failure, and workload pressure (Spronken-Smith, 2018).

Edwards et al. (2019) found that research is building on social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and integrating other approaches such as mindfulness, and positive psychology to improve graduate student well-being. Other measures to ensure graduate student success are program admission criteria, such as the implementation of graduate student support workshops and formal training programs in graduate school. They go on to suggest that students' advisors and the institutional academic community should engage in the promotion of SEL in graduate school to improve student well-being and performance.

Student Persistence

Hill and Conceicao (2019) examined doctoral student perspectives in the literature of varied disciplines regarding program and instructional support strategies that lead to doctoral student progress to degree completion. This study included adult doctoral students participating in a face-to-face setting as well as online students. They considered the diversity of current doctoral students and cited a 2017 survey conducted by the Council of Graduate Schools (2010) which concluded that 53.5 percent of doctoral students were female 23.9 percent of graduate students were underrepresented minorities, 20.9 percent were international students and 57.5 percent were part-time students.

Adult part-time students tend to be older than conventional college students and pursue their doctoral degrees in conjunction with a full-time job and families. Doctoral students are generally nontraditional, part-time, or first-generation students who lacked model parents who had completed at least an undergraduate degree (Hill & Conceicao,

2019). Nontraditional doctoral students are restricted in the availability for full-time study, social advisors, and acculturation to the academy (Hill & Conceicao, 2019). Other barriers that may present themselves are a significant event in their lives such as personal or occupational transitions during the process (Hill & Conceicao, 2019). Hill and Conceicao (2019) focused on how to promote student success, persistence, and graduation of graduate students.   The researchers identified two major conceptual categories relevant to doctoral student support and then found several subthemes for each category.

The two major themes that emerged from their review of literature were program support and instructional support strategies. Program strategies that were helpful in supporting student degree completion were program retention efforts, program characteristics and student preparation, research support, and social support. Doctoral programs that had established these efforts were found to be much more successful programs (Hill & Conceicao, 2019). Instructional strategies help create synergies through relationships developed between the student and faculty, student and their peers, and student and the process (Hill & Conceicao, 2019). Faculty supervision and relationships were found to be key components to influence doctoral students' progress to degree completion (Castro et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2006).

Institution and Program Support

Bain et al. (2011) conducted a study to identify factors that play an important role in the overall success of graduate students. The research participants were graduate students in the Educational Leadership and Counseling Department at Texas A&M University at Kingsville who had completed at least 9 semester hours. Bain et al. (2011)

surveyed 108 students from two professors, with the number responding totaling 70. The

study defines and identifies factors for success that are vital to both the institution and to

the individual student (Bain et al., 2011).   Bain et al. (2011) found that the study could be

a way to validate the program, identify success factors, highlight the impact of the

professor's influence on the graduate student's success.

Their review of literature found that attrition rates at the graduate level were high

(Bain et al., 2011). They found attrition rates in some institutions ranged from 30-70

percent and in a 40-year span, attrition rates nationwide stood at about 50 percent (Bain et

al., 2011). The attrition rates impacted the institutions by the way of lost fees,

recruitment cost, tuition cost and for the student were costs such as tuition fees,

opportunity costs, and emotional cost (Bain et al., 2011; Cassuto, 2013).   Bain et al.

(2011) found that motivation became a key success factor that was fostered in the

atmosphere of a nurturing academic environment.   Persistence was linked to motivation

and persistence relate to department culture, student-faculty relationships, financial

support, student involvement, and program satisfaction (Bain et al., 2011).

Although financial support was found to be of importance to graduate students, it

did not guarantee graduate school completion (Bain et al., 2011). These researchers

found attritions rates were higher among minorities and that giving them full fellowship

did not guarantee completion and an increased minority representation on the faculty

(Bain et al., 2011). Students with a favorable student advisor relationship experienced a

higher level of persistence and degree completion (Bain et al. ,2011; Crede et al., 2014;

Hart-Baldridge, 2020). Participants in the study scored student faculty relationships as of

high importance at 91.1% (Bain et al., 2011). The study found that student success came

from the professors communicating their interest in the student's success and pledging their assistance, but it required that the student also want to succeed (Bain et al., 2011).

It has been increasingly documented over the years in the retention literature that in order for institutions to be effective and realize their mission, retention must be viewed as an ongoing, campus wide responsibility requiring everyone's participation and contributions (Berger et al., 2012; Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). How a student enters a graduate program and how they proceed has much to do with the culture of the institution and how the program is set up to support them (Bartelse, et al., 2007).   Many of the theories used in studies of college student retention have been developed in reference to a theoretical model of persistence by Tinto (1975). Tinto (1975) states that persistence occurs when a student successfully integrates into the institution academically and socially. Jensen (2011) states that integration, in turn, is influenced by pre-college characteristics and goals, interactions with peers and faculty, and out-of classroom factors.

Tinto (1975) states, a unifying theme for many studies is the idea that a student's involvement in the social environment as well as the academic environment is critical to success in college. Spady's (1970) Drop Out Model ties four variables which contribute directly to social integration. Those four variables are intellectual development, social integration, satisfaction, and institutional commitment. It is suggested that the greater the extent to which students are integrated into the academic and social life of an institution, the more likely they will exhibit doctoral persistence (Earl-Novell, 2006). It is then reasonable to assume that integrating students into the institutions academic community would then ensure doctoral completion.

Economic

Economic integration is the degree to which financial needs are met while pursuing a degree (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) discuss the importance of economic integration and suggests that economic integration is essential and found that students that self-finance are less likely to persist. Research on the correlation between types of funding and doctoral persistence is largely discussed. According to Earl-Novell (2006) studies indicate that self-financing doctoral students are less likely to complete their degree when compared to students that received some type of assisted funding from the institution (Earl-Novell, 2006; Spronken-Smith, 2018). Those funds could have been awarded in the form of teaching assistantships, fellowships leading those students were more likely to be integrated in the department academically as a result of close links with faculty.

Robert Decker studied the success and attrition characteristics of economics students entering a Ph. D. program. Decker (1973) picks up where other studies focused on a frequent test of graduate student performance by using grade point average as a success indicator. Decker (1973) narrowed the definition of success and based success on the graduate student degree completion. Decker (1973) outlines the importance of degree completion for graduate students as a means of obtaining a particular type of employment position at college or employment as researcher. Ultimately, graduate students seek to earn their doctoral degree which permits access to certain select positions. Decker (1973) also outlines the importance of a student reaching degree completion for a program and institution. Students that complete their degree on time facilitate conceptualizing "efficiency" in a graduate program. Decker (1973) states that within the general Ph.D.

process, the cost to the educational institution is influenced by the number of students who successfully complete the program and earn a degree.

Decker (1973) studied a Ph.D. program's completion rate and found of 473 students entering a program from 1956 through 1965, 32 percent had completed the program, with 9 percent still in progress as of July 1, 1971. The remaining almost 60 percent of entering graduate students during that decade left the program with no degree. Decker (1973) states attrition rates are at times difficult to determine because a long period of time must elapse before final determination of students who are in progress can be determined.

Institution and Student Relationship

Another component of success for doctoral students is the interaction with the institute and the relationships between the members of the organization. Implied by studies is that through the course of their studies, a doctoral student is expected to acquire domain specific values, mentality, norms, knowledge, and skills needed to succeed in the scientific community (Leijen et al., 2014).   Leijen et al. (2014) state the academic community is an essential learning environment for students. This implies, according to Leijen, that institutes should create an environment that allows students to feel competent, integrated, and valuable members of the community. Leijen et al. (2014), stated, students perceived their learning environment more negatively than others also expressed more stress, exhaustion, anxiety and lack of interest.

Lovitts (2001) and Gardner (2008) found that doctoral student's lack of, or insufficient communication with the community, can lead to a discontinuation of studies. A study found that 56 percent of doctoral students who felt a lack of support

from the institution believed it to be one of the reasons they were not progressing in their studies; conversely, doctoral students who felt support from the academic community placed an emphasis on the feeling of belonging as a factor that motivated them to work hard in their post-graduate studies (Leijen et al., 2014).

Disciplines differ in terms of domain-specific traditions for socialization, cooperation, and engagement of doctoral students (Leijen et al., 2014). Socializing is easier in the natural sciences, where doctoral students often work in the same laboratory as a research group, than in the humanities, where a student often works alone on a research topic (Leijen et al., 2014). Regarding supervisory roles, natural and exact science doctoral students more frequently communicate with their supervisor than humanities doctoral students, and they have more opportunities for cooperation such as joint publications. According to Leijen et al. (2014), several studies claim this to be an explanation for higher defense rates in the natural sciences.

Should doctoral students not receive the necessary support from the staff or the organization, they turn to their peers. Leijen et al. (2014) noted that the most supportive community during doctoral studies are fellow students. According to Leijen et al. (2014) and McAlpine et al. (2012), it is shown that students require both academic and social integration in order to attain the utmost advantage from their research studies.

Variables such as relationships between the student and institution, or college are critical variables to student persistence. Earl-Novell (2006) states in efforts to support and integrate doctoral students, institutions offer them roles as teaching assistants, research assistants, and fellowships. These experiences have shown success in integrating students in the department academically as a result of them building close

links with faculty (Earl-Novell, 2006). Earl-Novell (2006) suggests that the assistantship

plays a fundamental role in integrating students socially and academically. Faculty act as

role models and are the mechanism through which primary socialization takes place

(Earl-Novel, 2006).

One of the aspects through which the theme of doctoral students' prolongation

and attrition has been addressed in recent studies is the interaction between the student

and the organization and the relationships between the members of the organization

(Bartelse et al., 2007; Cassuto, 2013; Leijen et al., 2016).   Gardner (2008) stated a

doctoral student is expected to acquire domain specific values, mentality, norms,

knowledge, and skills needed to succeed in the scientific community. Leijen et al. (2016)

found the academic community is an essential learning environment for the development

of doctoral students. This implies that institutions should be creating an environment in

which doctoral students feel competent, integrated and valuable members of the

community (Bartelse et al., 2007; Leijen et al., 2016).

Program Support

Program support should begin with recruitment, from initial outreach, course

selection, mapping of degree plans, and student orientation. Billups (2010) states,

researchers confirm that doctoral students become socialized differently than other

graduate or undergraduate students and seek different levels of engagement with faculty,

peers, and their institutions. Billups goes on to cite Tinto's model of integration as a

framework for institutions to reconsider the student support services for doctoral students.

Decker (1973) in his studies found two possible options for institutions to avoid

high attrition rates, a Doctor of Arts or the adoption of a two-track Ph.D. program. One

track designated specifically for students specializing in research or the other for those specializing in teaching.   Another option could be a strategic reduction in entering cohort size but that leads to other problems (Decker, 1973). Decker (1973) found that attrition rates are inevitable due to the need to satisfy conflicting objectives and imperfect admission screening procedures.

Faculty Support: Student & Mentor Relationship

Students entering college need guidance and doctoral students are no different. Studies conducted found that a crucial success factor in the doctoral study process for students was supervision (Ives & Rowley 2005; Lee 2008; Leijen et al. 2014). Further studies outline measurable interventions and activities taken by the faculty have a positive impact for students in their doctoral studies. Manathunga (2005) states supervision contains a pedagogical component, meaning that students might not automatically understand 'all intricacies of the research game' and doctoral students should be supported in that regard (as cited in Leijen et al., 2014). They go on to state that a pedagogical focus on supporting doctoral student's academic writing skills would also raise student esteem. Their research found that through guiding, modeling, feedback, and providing references the students' writing expertise will develop. Other efforts that should be implemented by professors are referred to as functional components of supervision. Experienced and successful supervisors tend to meet regularly with their students, monitor carefully their progress, and provide guidance at different stages depending on the individual needs of their students (Bartelse et al., 2007; Leijen et al., 2014). Their research found that a doctoral student's lack of communication with the department and faculty can lead to a discontinuation of studies.

Gervis and Wemmerrus (1988) studied graduate student degree progress based on both masters and doctoral students. They found the most significant variable impacting student persistence, such as involvement in their department of study. Interaction with faculty, especially with their own adviser, was equally crucial to continuance (as cited in Leijen et al., 2016). Gervis and Wemmerrus found that 5 percent of doctoral students felt that a lack of support from the academic community contributed to their lack of progress in their studies; as oppose to students that had experienced that interaction and support from the academic community emphasized the sense of belonging as a factor that contributed to their persistence toward completion (as cited in Leijen et al., 2016).

Brill et al (2014) and Posselt (2018) recognized the importance of mentoring and how it influences intellectual growth, professional socialization and progressive independence of the graduate student. In her study, she sought to understand how a professors' role in supporting doctoral students' persistence and well-being from groups that had excluded and marginalized in their field. She evaluated the phenomenology of faculty support in four high diversity science, technology, engineering, and mathematics Ph.D. programs at two research universities. She found that through specific behaviors, holistic faculty support had academic, psychosocial, and sociocultural dimensions graduate students were more successful in degree completion. She documented results from qualitative inquiries about faculty support in high diversity, high-selectivity Ph.D. programs and aligned those findings with those of previous finding to develop a framework for conceptualizing holistic faculty support for doctoral students. Seeking to improve how faculty educate and interact with historically marginalized groups, she

examined forms of faculty support of women and Black, Latino, and or Native American students.

Posselt's (2018) goal was to give a voice to underrepresented graduate students and their support and interactions with faculty. The goal of phenomenological research captured lived experiences of a particular group in relation to a given phenomenon. She referenced Husserl's (1931) phenomenological philosophy as a base and found that Garfinkel's ethnomethodological approach of focusing on the participants voice and highlight the intersubjective construction of social phenomena (Posselt, 2018).

She found that although students discussed the importance of access to academic support, faculty were not seen as the primary source of support. Instead, she found that students described that professor played a critical role in providing psychosocial support. Supportive professors normalized the struggles students faced by facilitating a growth minds-set, validating competence, and created spaces to discuss racialized and gendered aspects of academic life. This study contributed to the literature by highlighting how faculty normalizing the struggles of graduate school and academia promoted a more equitable learning outcome in a potentially fraught environment (Posselt, 2018).

Effective Advisement

It has been thought that students enrolling in graduate programs are usually self-guided and thought to not need much guidance. Doctoral students, despite facing distinct academic hurdles and developmental issues compared to undergraduate students, may nonetheless require formal support networks in order to achieve success (Cockrell et al. 2011; Thomas, 2017). Zelazek (2011) stated graduate students tend to be self-directed and read most if not all literature supplied by universities to guide what they should

accomplish to succeed at the graduate level. Unfortunately, some graduate students do

not read nor prepare as well as they should and need more to succeed. According to

Bartelse et al., 2007 and Glennen et al.,(1985), intrusive advisement is the periodic and

scheduled contact of the graduate student through all means necessary to monitor the

student's progress and assure that each is aware of what is necessary to succeed. Glennen

et al.,(1985) state, intrusive advisement has been used to increase retention at 2-year

colleges and has been gaining ground at four-year colleges to set students up for success.

Glennen et al.,(1985) state this intervention has helped at-risk students or students having

trouble with the transition to college. Advisors using an intrusive approach initiate early

contact; help the student to identify strengths and weaknesses; and develop plans for

academic, social, and organization improvement (Smith, 2007; Thomas, 2017).

Researchers Craft et al. (2016) sought to identify the factors that lead to a high

number of doctoral student attrition rates. Their study found that advisor-advisee

relationships, unclear expectations, a lack of interaction between advisor and advisee,

trust, and intellectual influenced attrition rates. When these supports were not evident,

graduate students wanted to change advisors or transfer to other graduate programs.

Those who chose to stay within their initial track experienced extended timelines in

earning their degree due to poor advising. Because the impact of doctoral advising

impacts the degree completion, they found that higher education personnel should

encourage effective doctoral advising. This study highlighted several factors that

influence effective advising including characteristics and roles of the advisors. They

found the following as effective advising: advisors are accessible, helpful, socializing,

and caring. Also noted in the study were the role of the advisor as a source of reliable

information, departmental and occupational socializers, advocates, and role models. Brill et al. (2014) and Craft et al. (2016) found that the last component of a successful advisor is one that also incorporates mentoring behaviors aimed at professional development.

In their research, they discussed the difference between the interpersonal and instructional components of advising (Craft et al., 2016). They go on to explain that the interpersonal components focus on the relationship between the mentor and mentee, such as conflict resolution and the development of a positive rapport. Instructional component focuses on the didactic or task-focused nature of the mentor and mentee. A major variable found in the literature was role expectations which formed the conceptual framework in their study. Their study found that concepts in the literature state that each enters the relationship with expectations and that a failure to fulfill those expectation can result in strained relationships, misperceptions about the intent of inquiry or advice, and lead to program attrition.

Confusion between advising and mentoring was another theme that emerged from their data. Unclear job descriptions at the institution level between the two did not provide faculty with clear expectations. This ambiguity along with more accountability for students than for faculty advisors. Their research found that there was an emphasis on the importance of holding doctoral students accountable for making satisfactory progress toward their degree, but minimal accountability measures for specific faculty attitudes and behaviors that reflect effective advising. Institutional documents described reviews of the faculty advising took a reactive approach and mentioned that performance indicators for advisors were deemed necessary at the discretion of program leadership. Craft et al. (2016) found that doctoral advisors play a major role in a graduate student's

life. The attitude of the advisor influenced the students' attitude about their doctoral experience, their relationship, as well as their progress towards degree completion (Hart-Baldridge, 2020). Their research also suggested that unsatisfactory advisor-advisee relationships contribute to doctoral student attrition.

Craft et al. stated a clearer picture of responsibilities for both faculty advisors and graduate students need to be created. An increased accountability for faculty advisors in doctoral advising as effective methods of evaluation related to faculty performance in effective student advising. Researchers found the creation of avenues for student feedback into the process for individual faculty improvement as well as for overall departmental program effectiveness.

Hager (2018) conducts a three-year case study investigating the influence of social support and isolation in the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program on the professional achievements of its graduates. The candidates were registered in an international doctorate program in business administration (DBA). The program encourages teachers and students to form advising teams and engage in international collaboration. It also provides students with opportunities to gain experience in scientific publication and international conference presentations during their studies (Hager, 2018). Throughout their academic program, the candidates underwent regular advising sessions and progress evaluations. These sessions were largely conducted to ensure that the candidates were effectively developing the subject of their research and writing their dissertations, as well as managing their time efficiently.

The availability of academic advising for Ph.D. students was there, but not fully effective or impactful (Cockrell, 2011; Hager, 2018; Kim, 2007). Their advisory

experiences varied significantly. One candidate received specialized guidance from a team of primary and secondary academic advisors who were knowledgeable in their unique field of study. In contrast, another candidate never had an advisor who possessed significant expertise in their discipline. The structural aspect may have posed a more significant issue. The candidates faced ambiguous expectations regarding the completion of the program, resulting in a lack of consistent articulation of metrics for effective professional growth and development (Hager, 2018). Hager argues that in order to promote academic and social integration, faculty supervisors should receive training in valuable advising skills and be clear about their expectations for advising in their relationships with students.

Chapter II Summary

This literature review outlined the variables that supported students in completing their doctoral studies. The study investigated how social and academic integration impact the persistence of Ph.D. students at a Hispanic Serving Institution, using Tinto's theory as the theoretical framework.

Decker (1973) identified key traits of successful doctoral Ph.D. applicants, including the caliber of undergraduate training, the quality of undergraduate teaching, and its influence on the excellence of graduate teachers. Burger (2018) and Fleming et al. (2014) suggest that family and cultural values play a significant role in influencing the proportion of Hispanic students in postgraduate study. Nielsen et al. (2017) utilized the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework to examine the impact of instructor support on the subjective well-being of postgraduate business students by enhancing their psychological resources such as self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism

(psychological capital (PsyCap)). When instructors provide students with guidance and resources such as advice and information, it boosts their confidence in their academic abilities and helps them handle the challenges of university work, resulting in increased self-efficacy (Nielsen et al., 2017). Bain et al (2011) discovered that student success depended on professors expressing their interest in the student's achievement and offering their support, contingent on the student's own desire to succeed. Cockrell et al. (2011) found that doctoral students, despite facing distinct academic hurdles and developmental issues compared to undergraduate students, may nonetheless require formal support networks in order to achieve success. A cornerstone to creating effective advisor mentoring practices may be raising faculty members' awareness of the value of the advisor/mentor connection with the students (Brill et al., 2014; Cockrell et al., 2011; Hart-Baldridge, 2020).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology and procedures for this phenomenological case study regarding what factors contribute to or hinder doctoral students in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution. The researcher will use Tinto's persistence theory when analyzing the data. This study may help educational leaders plan and allocate appropriate resources in areas of need for doctoral students, especially in HSIs. Educational leaders at HSIs may gain some knowledge related to doctoral degree completion and can therefore implement supportive practices for doctoral students. This chapter includes a description of the research design, the research questions, how participants were selected, the instruments that were used, the data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Design / Methodology

A phenomenological case study is appropriate when the goal of research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in each situation (Stake, 2010). As outlined by Creswell (2013), a qualitative approach is appropriate when a researcher seeks to understand relationships between variables. Researchers have stated that a case study is a choice of what is studied, an investigation of a phenomenon that occurs within a specific context (Stake, 2010). The researcher used a phenomenological collective case study design (Creswell, 2016). In a

phenomenological investigation, it is essential to obtain a comprehensive account of the subjective experiences of a certain event from a group of people, ranging from 3 to 15 participants. The researchers investigate and document the circumstances in which individuals encounter the phenomena (Creswell, 2016). In a case study such as this one the bonded system is the university's doctoral programs. An emphasis is made to evaluate the development of the students after a period when they experienced factors that hinder or contribute to the completion of their respective degrees in various disciplines. A case study leads to a more concrete knowledge that is tangible and illuminative (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2012). Triangulation of the data will include the use of semi-structured interviews and member checking. Because the purpose of this study is to examine the experiences and perceptions of doctoral students at a Hispanic Serving Institution, a qualitative approach was the best choice.

Research Questions

In this study the researcher answered to the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the most important factors contributing to persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?

RQ2: What are the most important factors hindering persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?

Site and Participant Selection

A University in South Texas was selected as the site for this study. This university has four practitioner doctorates and seven doctor of philosophy programs. The practitioner degrees are an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, OTD in Occupational Therapy, and a MD, Doctor of Medicine. The Doctor

of Philosophy degrees are a Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Counseling, a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, a Ph.D. in Physics, a Ph.D. in Business, Ph.D. Programs in Chicano Latino Studies, and a Ph.D. in Mathematics and Statistics with Interdisciplinary Applications. The student enrollment from the Spring of 2023 in some of these programs are depicted in the table below.

Table 1: Spring 2023 Enrollment for Institutional Doctoral Programs

Degree	Major	Student Count
ED.D.	Curriculum and Instruction	211
ED.D.	Educational Leadership	88
OTD.	Occupational Therapy	14
PH.D.	Clinical Psychology	20
PH.D.	Business Administration	41
PH.D.	Rehabilitation Counseling	36

The researcher interviewed participants from four doctoral programs: one student from Ph.D. in Business Administration, one student from Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Counseling, two students from Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and three students from Ed.D. in Curriculum & Instruction. The participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Participant A became known as Anthony, Participant B became known as Bob, Participant C became known as Carina, Participant D became known as Debra, Participant E became known as Edward, Participant F became known as Fred and Participant G became known as Greg.

Anthony is a doctoral candidate in Rehabilitation Counseling. Anthony earned a Master in Clinical Mental Health in Counseling with the Department of Education specializing in special populations from Lamar University, a CACREP-accredited institution. This took Anthony 3 years to complete. Anthony is single but has been

supported by his parents and siblings in his decision to pursue his doctorate. Initially, Anthony was concerned about finances but then secured a position as a research assistant in his department.

Bob completed his master's degree in Mathematics from the University of Texas Pan American. A colleague from work encouraged him to return to get his doctorate. Bob states that after he went through the admissions process, he was surprised to make it. Bob did not complete his dissertation and timed out and would be considered All but Dissertation - ABD. He attributes this in part to the pandemic in 2019-2021. Although he states he still could have completed the dissertation, he became unmotivated to complete it. His family was supportive of his decision to pursue his doctoral and finances were not of concern as his job provided tuition reimbursement.

Carina is a doctoral candidate earning her degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Carina earned her master's in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas Christian University under a four-plus-one program. After she completed her undergraduate degree, she continued through summer, fall, spring, and summer again to complete her masters. A few years later, she moved back to the valley where she and her husband were financially well, so she decided to pursue her doctorate in Curriculum and instruction.

Debra is a doctoral candidate earning her degree in Educational Leadership. Debra earned her master's in two years from the UT Brownsville in Educational Administration. UTRGV was recruiting within districts at the time Debra was considering pursuing her doctorate. The University had established a presence locally which added to her decision to apply. After much thought and discussion with her husband, they decided the positives much outweighed any negatives financially. The

University assisted all students during the pandemic and finances have not been of concern for her.

Edward is a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at UTRGV. He is a three-time graduate of UT Brownsville – UTB, Texas State College - TSC, and UTRGV who earned his master's in education leadership from UT Brownsville in three years. Edward was looking for a program that best fit his professional direction in technology and education and which allowed him access to the faculty. He found that as well as a top-ten education technology-recognized doctoral program at UTRGV. Edwards family is supportive of his decision and his finances were not an issue as his company offers tuition reimbursement.

Fred is a doctoral candidate in the College of Business at UTRGV. He earned a Master of Science and Accounting from the University of Texas-Pan American in one year. He added that he appreciated the face-to-face contact while earning his master's degree. Fred also added that he would need his doctorate to advance in his occupation. Fred's family has been supportive of his decision to pursue his doctorate and finances have not been an issue.

Greg is a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum and Instruction program at the UTRGV. He earned his master's degree in Educational Administration at University of Texas Pan American in two years. He mentioned that the program was good and supportive. Greg retired when he decided to pursue his doctorate because curriculum is something that interested him during his time as an administrator. Greg's family is supportive of his decision to pursue his doctorate. Finances is not an issue; however he was offered a position as a research assistant which he has accepted.

Instrumentation

An instrument developed by Garnet Grosjean (1975) (Appendix A) was used to gather data during the interviews. This questionnaire included 43 open-ended items with probing prompts. Some examples of the questions are:

1. Please describe your major family responsibilities.

2. Some people describe the process of working on the dissertation as a
    lonely process or one where they feel isolated. What has your experience been?

3. When you embarked on your doctoral program, what type of position did you
     consider you would obtain upon completion?

    Permission to use the instrument was granted by the author (Appendix B).

The interview was semi-structured, not all questions were developed in advance as the researcher listened to responses and asked for clarification or additional information based on the responses. A complete version of the instrument may be found Appendix A

Data Collection Procedures

Once IRB approved the study, the researcher contacted the Office of Legal Affairs at UTRGV to request a list of student emails of students who have completed their course work and are one to two years into their dissertation. A sample of the recruitment email may be found in the appendix (Appendix C). By giving consent, they will receive an outline of the process – agenda, time invested, and the number of interviews (Appendix D).

Before the interview started, the researcher and participants communicated through email, text and phone calls to establish times of availability. This served as a

"meet and greet" as well as an introduction. Once on Zoom, we spent a few minutes talking to ensure the participants felt comfortable with the researcher, the questions and their responses so they could provide a rich and detailed account of their experiences. Establishing rapport is essential throughout the interview as it allows the respondent to offer a comprehensive and intricate description of the events crucial to the study (McGrath et al, 2018). Consent was given verbally through Zoom prior to the start of the interview. All interviews were recorded using a university issued laptop to house the interviews on the university Zoom Cloud. The location of the participants occurred either from their home, their office and were conducted through Zoom video conference. Data was collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews that allowed participants to provide their perspective and lived experiences about their background, environment, the institute, their attitude, and intent. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using the transcript feature. The length of the interviews were between 45 minutes and an hour and a half. The transcription was then emailed to the participants to review and edit for accuracy for member checking. Member-checking is a procedure in which data transcripts are shown to some or all participants to obtain their input (McKim, 2023). Presenting transcripts to participants early on ensures the researcher has accurate data to analyze. This process helps eliminate the possibility of misrepresentation during the data analysis process (McKim, 2023)

Data Analysis Procedures

After each interview was completed, the interviews were reviewed for accuracy. The researcher read carefully to establish themes and sub themes. The transcriptions were then annotated for each individual to develop themes based on them. Once

completed, a cross analysis was done to see if there are similar themes amongst the participants. There were multiple coding reviews to establish themes and structural descriptions. The "essence" of the phenomena will be reported using composite descriptions (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Then, the understanding of the essence of the experiences could be described.

The researcher began by examining transcriptions of each participant followed by a comprehensive analysis of other interviews to uncover recurring themes and subthemes. The proposed methodology involved the process of annotating transcriptions by the systematic application of codes to relevant words, phrases, sentences, or sections. These codes helped the identification of significant qualitative data and patterns. Labels can encompass a wide range of categories, including actions, activities, concepts, differences, attitudes, procedures, and any other important aspects. Annotations play a crucial role in facilitating the organization of data.

Limitation

One limitation of this study is only data from seven doctoral students from 4 programs at one Hispanic Serving Institution were collected, which may limit transferability. An additional limitation is that during the time of the study it is unknown if the doctoral students will complete their respective degrees.

Qualitative research uses smaller samples than quantitative research. Qualitative research methods are often concerned with gaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or meaning (and heterogeneities in meaning)—which are often centered on the how and why of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene, or set of social interactions. In-depth interview work is more inductive and emergent than

hypothesis testing and does not generalize to a bigger group (Dworkin, 2012). In-depth interviews strive to build "categories from the data and then to analyze relationships between categories" while understanding study participants' "lived experience" (Dworkin, 2012).

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations refer to the specific boundaries that a researcher establishes in order to make the research more manageable and focused on the research issue. These boundaries determine what is included and excluded from the study (Coker, 2022). A delimitation in this study is that only currently enrolled students of doctoral program will be part of the study, not doctoral students that have graduates from various programs.

Positionality

With a background as an undergraduate academic advisor in both a community college and a public research university, the researcher engaged in collaborative efforts to craft academic advisement initiatives. These programs were strategically designed to help students uncover the nuances of the hidden curriculum, enriching their educational journey beyond traditional coursework.

Chapter III Summary

This chapter described the research design, the research inquiries, the methodology for participant selection, the instruments employed, and the processes for data collecting and analysis. The researcher employed a phenomenological collective case study design, as described by Creswell (2016). When conducting a phenomenological study, it is crucial to get a thorough description of the personal experiences of a certain event from a group of individuals. The university's Ph.D. and

Ed.D. programs serve as the bonded system in this case study. Through the interview the

researcher assessed the progress of students following a period in which they encountered

factors that either impeded or facilitated the completion of their individual degrees in

different disciplines. A case study provided a clear understanding of the participants

personal experiences (Gay, et al., 2012). The data was triangulated through the utilization

of semi-structured interviews and member checking. An instrument developed by Garnet

Grosjean (1975) (Appendix A) was used to gather data during the interviews. This

questionnaire included 43 open-ended items with probing prompts.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The researcher examined patterns of persistence and lived experiences of doctoral students at a Hispanic Serving Institution in deep south Texas. Data was collected from individual semi-structured interviews that identified key themes, issues, or discussion points embedded in the transcript (Creswell, 2007). This chapter is divided into sections that were guided by two research questions, the participants, themes and summary findings.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the researcher for the study:

RQ1: What are the most important factors contributing to persistence in completing a
      doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?

RQ2: What are the most important factors hindering persistence in completing a doctoral
      degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?

The research questions guided the study of persistence and examined how each participant viewed their doctoral experience and found a way to persist through the process. The findings in this chapter reveal what the participants' experienced which generated themes.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposeful criterion sampling for effective identification and selection of information rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were solicited and recruited through their program that matched the phenomenon, over the age of 18, core complete and at least one to two years into their dissertation. Among the participants, two were elderly, two were middle-aged, and two were in early adulthood. In terms of nationality, one was Bangladeshi, two were White/Caucasians, and four were Mexican-American. The participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Participant A became known as Anthony, Participant B became known as Brad, Participant C became known as Carina, Participant D became known as Debra, Participant E became known as Edward, Participant F became known as Fred and Participant G became known as Greg.

The seven participants are or have been enrolled in a doctoral program, are core complete and have worked on their dissertations for one to two years at a Hispanic serving institute. All participants have experienced the dissertation wall and with proper support have been able to overcome this roadblock to pursue their degree with the exception of Bob.

Themes and Subthemes

For this study, the researcher employed a robust instrument comprising five distinct themes: background, environment, organization, attitude, and intent. These themes served as the foundational framework for systematically examining various facets of the doctoral student experience. By utilizing an established instrument (Grosjean, 1975) with predefined themes, the study ensured a comprehensive exploration of the

factors influencing doctoral students' educational journeys. This approach facilitated a nuanced analysis of individual backgrounds, institutional contexts, organizational structures, student attitudes, and intentions, providing valuable insights into the complexities of doctoral education.

The researcher interviewed seven students to gain insight into their educational experience, their environment, the institution, their attitude, and intent. Once interviews were completed participants reviewed their transcripts. Following the transcript verification of membership to verify accuracy, the researcher proceeded with the assessment of the data and the identification of key themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Using NVIVO, the researcher analyzed the coded data to identify themes then sub themes began to emerge as well. This allowed the researcher to examine each participant's experience in completing their dissertation, while also identifying commonalities and transferability in their shared experiences.

Background

Background variables encompass the array of characteristics that students bring with them to a program, significantly shaping their interactions within the organizational context. As proposed by Bean (1982), these variables serve as indicators of the potential challenges and issues that institutions may encounter when admitting students with specific attributes. By considering factors such as demographic characteristics, prior educational experiences, socioeconomic backgrounds, and personal motivations, institutions can gain valuable insights into the diverse needs and expectations of their student population. Understanding the influence of background variables enables institutions to tailor their support services, academic programs, and institutional policies

to better meet the needs of their students, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The following are some quotes from transcript interviews:

Tell me about starting your doctoral program.

>Anthony: I did my master's program at Lamar University. which is a CACREP accredited program in clinical mental health counseling. After completing my graduation, I started working with a hospital where I had some clients who had mental health issues and physical disability. I was trying to help those clients with their mental health issues but due to their physical disabilities, they are always relapse. I was trying to make a relapse prevention plan. But I didn't have any formal education regarding rehabilitation. Therefore, I was planning to have a doctoral degree in rehabilitation that will make me a complete professional, who can provide services holistically towards those clients who have physical disabilities and mental health issues. While I was searching the rehabilitation counseling programs, I came across UTRGV. They have a good program, UTRGV's rehabilitation counselling program which is ranked thirteenth.
>
>I also noticed faculty are highly competent, and they have a wonderful research agenda. and from a good research university. So, I thought that it will be a good choice for me to study at UTRGV as well as one of the largest Hispanic serving population.

Bob: So, I graduated back in 1980, with a master's degree in mathematics. I had been working for 30 years on what I did. I didn't expect to go back but I had a friend of mine who worked at the same place where I was teaching, and he said that to me. "Why don't you try and go ahead and file your application." And I did and expected that I was weak in my writing, but I'm good in mathematics. But I applied and then got accepted into the program back in 2019 or 2013 I got accepted. That's how I got recruited and into the program, through a friend of mine who did finish his doctoral in the same program.

Carina: I chose UTRGV because I am from South Texas, and I wanted a local university, for the community. Turns out, the program I chose is fully asynchronous. Well, it's fully online. But still, I did get a little bit of the community factor. So that's why I chose UTRGV, I wanted something local.

Debra: I chose UTRGV, because we had some visitors where I worked. Actually, I was curious about a doctoral program and we had visitors actually visit our district in Harlingen. They had suggested or talked to us about the possibility of having some doctoral classes in Harlingen so that opened my eyes. I thought, okay, well, that that sounds beneficial. If it's gonna be in Harlingen, I know that they have UTRGV medical building. I know that they also mentioned they were using our collegiate High School building

and back then it was TSC. We had some classes there at TSC. So I thought, well, if I can get my doctorate close to home I mean that's a great deal right? So that's when I started looking into it.

 Edward: For me, it was just a local program. You know, I live here in the Valley I wanted somewhere that I was familiar with. Oddly enough, I'm a 3 time graduate UTB, TSC, and UTRGV, so yeah, I wanted to kind of keep in in the same family. But yeah, I think it's just the fact that they're within proximity. It's convenient, you know. It's not like these people are in another part of the country. That I'm never gonna get to see. I can see them at the grocery store, you know I can go to the campus and visit them, so I think this proximity and convenience were the 2 main factors. Cost as well, you know the cost of the institution compared to some of the other programs I compared it to was definitely more of a value, and the last one. I think, on top of all that was just the fact that it was a recognized program. You know, I was looking at top 10 education technology doctoral programs around the country. And this came out on the list, you know, and one more. The fact that it was virtual. I didn't want to give up Saturdays. I could not go to Austin for 6 weeks. I needed this program to be completely virtual. So that was the final factor.

Fred: In my master's program, we actually had a bit of accounting research. So I was really interested in the research part and decided to pursue my doctorate.

Greg: Well, it's been over 20 years since I had gone through the

master's program, and was considering retiring from public end, and

wanted to do something in curriculum cause. That's what interested

me most. When I was a principal and an administrator, I wanted to

get further into that and then do something. You know, after I retired

I wanted to do something with curriculum.

Environment

Environmental variables, while often beyond the direct control of an institution,

exert significant influence on students' decisions regarding persistence or withdrawal

from academic programs. Students demonstrate persistence when they successfully

integrate academically and socially into the college environment (Anderson, 1981; Astin,

1975; Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1986) Challenge of balancing the roles of a student with other

responsibilities, such as family obligations, underscoring the complex interplay between

academic pursuits and personal life (Tinto (1986). This dual role expectation can create

conflicts and stressors that impact students' ability to remain engaged in their studies.

Bean (1982) further emphasize the impact of environmental factors, such as opportunities

for transfer, familial responsibilities, and financial constraints, on dropout rates. These

variables reflect external pressures that students face, which can contribute to their

decision-making process regarding continued enrollment in their academic programs.

Acknowledging the influence of these environmental variables is essential for

institutions seeking to support student success and retention. McKinzie et al. (2006)

found that graduate students were faced with stressors such as increased academic

demands, limited federal financial support, and emotional or psychological pressure.

While institutions may not have direct control over these factors, they can implement strategies to mitigate their impact and provide resources to support students facing challenges. By offering financial aid, flexible academic policies, and support services tailored to the needs of students with familial responsibilities, institutions can help alleviate some of the burdens associated with environmental variables. Bain et al. (2011) found that motivation became a key success factor that was fostered in the atmosphere of a nurturing academic environment. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive campus culture can create a sense of belonging and community that encourages students to persist despite external challenges. It is suggested that the greater the extent to which students are integrated into the academic and social life of an institution, the more likely they will exhibit doctoral persistence (Earl-Novell, 2006). Through proactive efforts to address environmental factors, institutions can enhance student retention and success, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being of their academic community.

During the interview and transcript analysis, numerous sub-themes were identified within the category of Environment. These sub-themes include Work, Family, and Finances.

Work

When asked about their employment and the importance of the completion of their doctoral, participants responded with the following:

> Anthony: As far as employment is concerned, the completion of doctoral program is very important. While I have been working on my dissertation and I have been in job market. I have been applying to different institutions for a job and most of the institution are

asking me one question, which is very common. When are you graduating? Have you defended? Ok, so it means that they want a conferred degree. So as I have experienced, graduation is very important for me, too complete so I can get a job. So I believe that it is needed in the job market.

Bob: I am retired and the only thing I do right now is I am an adjunct faculty in higher education.

Was the completion of your dissertation necessary for advancement or successful continuation of your employment?

 Bob: No I was just wanted to get that advanced degree.

Carina: I am a assistant professor at a University and I work full time. I'm trying to finish up my dissertation and to get through the IRB this week, actually it's very hard. I don't have children yet, even though we've been married for 7 years and I don't know how people do it with family, I really don't. I started the program in 2020 and Covid happened. So I felt like it was the best time to be in school because the whole world shut down, and all I needed to do was focus. So I was really privileged in that sense that I got to just focus on school for like 2 years, basically. Now that things are back and running, I'm really busy. And it's like, Oh, God, I've gotta finish this.

Debra: Yes, I'm a principal at a middle school, and not needed, because there's many people within our organization that don't have a doctorate and have been able to to move up in different roles. But

for me personally, I feel that it is. I want to have that added piece where, if opportunities came up later on, I had that as a backup.

Edward: It's recommended, you know. So I got hired when I only had my master's degree. A lot of my colleagues already had their doctorate. So it's an interesting mix. It was not a requirement for my employment, nor is it a requirement for me to continue to be employed. So it's just something that I felt I set that as a goal for myself to complete. The company reimburses me for my tuition. So that was another big part of of the decision to to to finish my doctorate. I think the fact that they offered the tuition reimbursement was a big factor.

Fred: Yes. I'm a partner at a local CPA firm and the windows of opportunity that it opens is very important. As well as a potential for increased pay. But also, you know, having that certificate that shows you went through a program adds a lot of credibility to research. I think it's got a lot of value there as well.

Greg: I'm retired, but I work part-time as a graduate assistant and doing some research with 2 professors on a reading program in several school districts in the valley.

Greg: I'm an instructional coach. I work with teachers that are implementing the program and give them then feedback on how they're implementing the program. Also do some assessments of students collect data. You know, for the program. but primarily

coaching. When we finished collecting the data just before spring break. So there may be some you know, report writing data analysis but the program or the position ends in May. So it it's gonna finish up in the next few months.

Family

When asked about their major family responsibilities, participants responded with the following:

> Anthony: As I am the oldest and only son of my family and my parents are almost getting older. They have different health issues, underlying conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure, So I have a huge family responsibility. Not onlydo I need to provide assistance to my family financially, but also I have to take care of my parents in other ways like eating, whether they need to check up a doctor sort of stuff. So I have to take care of every areas of their life , as well as my 2 sisters.
>
> One of my sisters, got married, my another sisters, is studying. I have a responsibility to my sisters too. In our society, male persons are the responsible for running the family. They need to earn money and females, they will work at home instead of focusing on other things. Although there are some drastic changes in their recent years such as females are now also working outside. However, they always need to take care of the family. Even though they are working, they need to maintain the family as well.

Bob: My responsibility has been to support my wife and my kids. But during this time, I had my kids with me, and they all graduated within that time frame, and they all left the Rio Grande Valley. So, my responsibility was to try to get it done and the hassle was just timing. We had remodeled the house and I had space made in the house where I could lock myself up and do work.

Carina: Really not too much, since we don't have children, it's just me and my husband and he works in Edinburg, and I also work in Edinburg. Both of our families are in the Rio Grande Valley, so we do try to see them. I probably see my family weekly, and we have grandparents that every now and then we'll try to help take care of. But I'd say it's very minimal but again, I do know a lot of my colleagues who have family, who have children and its very tough.

Debra: Well, I'm a wife and a mother and my daughter is 16. So if you can imagine I'm on my third year and almost finished here right. Hopefully this coming month, actually. So for the last 3 years, she was 12 turned 13 then she turned 16. It involved a lot of me still making sure that she was doing what she needs to do, and taking her to school and to practice, and making sure she was still involved. This was in addition to having my household items that I needed to do right. So, my work at home, I have a cleaning lady and a yard guy but when you think about home, it's more for making sure my

daughter was ok I was still able to do my schoolwork, but I was still able to focus on my daughter's needs.

Researcher: Okay, to what extent does your significant other accept the sacrifices of your doctorate?

Debra: So when I mentioned it, 3 and a half years ago. We discussed that our daughter is gonna be in basketball season. I didn't know if I wanted to miss out on games. Maybe this is not a good time, and my husband said, there's never gonna be a good time, cause I wanted to do it back when she was 2 or 3 years old but you know, time passes by and though no, I'm gonna wait later. I thought I'm gonna miss out on her little elementary years later. But then middle school time came, and I was like, I don't even know if now is a good time, because I don't wanna miss this time, and it's a critical stage. But my husband said, look you said that long time ago. You're saying that now, later on it's gonna be college time. You're gonna feel older, just do it. So as far as the support for my husband, that was another big determining factor. Because with my thoughts of yeah, they really laid out how busy it's gonna be. Am I gonna be able to do this? But I definitely had his support. And he said, there's never gonna be a good time. Just do it.

Edward: Oh, yeah. So married, 4 daughters, one grandson, my youngest daughter is 10 going to be 11 this year and my oldest is 25,

and she lives in Austin. She is a specialist that works with autistic children. So she followed my pathway into education.

Researcher: to what extent does your significant other accept the sacrifices of your doctorate.

Edward: Yeah, she stays home with my older daughter She's she was in education, but she kind of dedicated herself full time. So yeah, I think I wouldn't be able to do a lot of what I've done through the doctoral program such as late nights, working on projects, and online meetings. Having her focus on the family side has made a big difference. And I think I couldn't have done both.

Fred: Sure, I'm married and I have 2 kids. So yeah, I definitely have responsibilities like taking care of them, taking them to school, etc. Yeah, definitely a lot of responsibility there.

Greg: Well, I am a father, 4 kids 8 grandkids all the kids are grown. Obviously, the youngest is 27 you know, and as far as you know, those responsibilities I don't really have any other care taking responsibilities. I also have my in-laws and my parents who are are getting older, so more time is spent helping them out. but they're still pretty much able bodied. But you know, they have doctors, appointments, and you know things like that. So just helping out where we can. Yeah, I don't. I don't have a lot of you know.

Finances

When asked about their financial situation when they began the program, participants

responded with the following:

> Anthony: At the very beginning. My financial situation was very
>
> bad. I used to get around 800 or something from the school as a
>
> graduate assistant. That was a very insignificant amount to survive,
>
> 800 a month as a graduate assistant, it was very insignificant, The
>
> amount increased at the very beginning, because the university
>
> department allotted me $10,000 for 2 semesters, spring and
>
> summer.
>
> So, I must survive from January to August. So within $10,000, after
>
> cutting the tax and subtracting everything I used to get, 800
>
> something I exactly cannot remember the amount right now, but
>
> somewhere in the residence of 800 and that was very difficult for
>
> me to survive and pay home rent and insurance. My vehicle was
>
> damaged so I did not have to pay insurance. I did end up paying
>
> money for transportation such as Uber. This turned out to being
>
> expensive because every time I needed to go somewhere, I had to
>
> call Uber. So, in a way, it was a huge financial struggle for me at the
>
> very beginning and I became physically sick. There were some
>
> medications I had to buy from Walmart that were expensive as well.
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> So, it was a huge, huge problem, and then COVID started and I had
>
> to cope with it. I could not go outside, and this area was totally new

to me. Once, as I mentioned earlier, I came to visit South Texas, but I don't think I could have the opportunity to explore more. Being an international student had limitations to work outside. I couldn't find a job to deal with my financial situation outside the campus. So it was very difficult and challenging for me to survive. I had huge academic pressure compared to my master's where I easily coped with all the academic struggles.

Bob: I didn't get a doctoral degree, that's the bad story about this. But did I learn something.

Finances were a factor and now I am stuck paying for a degree I didn't get. I was counting on being able to get a job but am unable to and I have this debt.

Carina : I feel that UTRGV is very affordable, and they work with you on different plans. Especially through Covid, in my experience, there was a lot of financial forgiveness, and that was important. That helps my husband and I a lot. So for each semester I'd get $1,000 off a semester and again I'm coming from private school up in Fort Worth, where school was very expensive, so UTRGV feels very affordable compared to other schools in the nation. So it's I think it's fine.

Debra: When I began it, that was another determining factor I was like, Hey, how much is this gonna cost? Luckily, my husband and I looked at UTRGV's cost for a couple of classes, and we laid out how

much the program is gonna cost? If I say, you know, if it's 69 credit hours divided by 3. I knew I needed 20, some classes times the $1,600, or whatever is more or less right with books and all that you know at the end realized it was going to be like a $48,000 sacrifice or whatnot but then we thought, Okay, well, let's look at back then, 3 years ago, a leadership position that I could use this degree, whether it's a central office admin assistant superintendent, director, whatever it may be, there was, you know pay differences between what I was making, and I mean, of course, they range right from superintendent. But I mean for some of the upper level. I was like, Okay, well, you know, some of them are like $12,000 differences versus $50,000. But to my husband he said, Yeah, but we need to think about if you're in that for another 5, 8, 10 years. You know, you're getting payed this much. The program is gonna pay itself later on, right?

As we thought about it I was like, should I do it? Should I not? Being able to use that additional income for our family was really a determining factor. But, like I said at the end, he was like, No, you just do it. This is a personal goal of yours, it will pay itself out at the end. He goes hopefully. One day you will have that different position and at the end, he was like what are you showing our daughter? You're showing our daughter that that anybody can do it right and get that highest level degree. She's always wanted to go to medical

school, he goes. You're getting the highest degree on the education side. You're showing her that she should do it, no matter what, if you could do it at 40 years old, you know. So we talked about that privately and decided It's always been a personal goal. We looked at the financial side of it, he said at the end just do it, because at the end, hopefully it will pay ou. If not, well, it won't right, you know. Maybe you continue getting the pay that you're getting now. But at the end it's also a personal thing for me. So it was about having that degree at the end.

Edward: You know. Obviously, we're working for this company. The fact that I took the job with the company, my financial security was a lot better than before. Like, I said I think I probably would have either delayed or not done the program at all. If I wasn't in the financial situation that I was in. If I was struggling, you know, month to month I think that would have influenced the decision to not pursue a doctorate. I think you have to be in a really good place financially with your family to pursue something like this. There's too many things that can distract you and take you away, and how stressful could that be.

Fred: Yeah, I'm pretty comfortable, financially.

Greg: No, we're in good financial shape. We have no debt and I was able to pay for the program. I pay out of pocket, you know, and my savings. So yeah, it's not very costly to go to UTRGV when

compared to other universities. So the last few years. because of

Covid they've been given some incentives maybe $500 a semester.

They did that for a couple of semesters. So you know that that

certainly helped out. But you know, with the Covid money they

got But no it hasn't been a hardship for me.

Organization

Organizational variables, in contrast to environmental variables, are within the

purview of institutional control and play a significant role in shaping students'

experiences and interactions within the academic setting. Drawing from sociological

perspectives such as Durkheim (1951), organizational variables encompass factors that

determine the extent to which students align with group values and receive support from

friendships within the institution. Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975) further delineate key

organizational variables, such as grade performance, normative congruence, peer group

interaction, and faculty engagement, which influence students' integration into the

academic community and their likelihood of persistence. Bean (1982) expands this

framework to include additional organizational variables, such as close friendships,

membership in campus organizations, informal interactions with faculty, and the

helpfulness of advisors, which collectively shape students' interactions and experiences

within the organizational context. Spady's (1970) further supports the importance of the

organization and states that a student's decision to leave a specific social system is

influenced by various factors such as family and educational background, academic

potential, normative congruence, friendship support, intellectual development, grade

performance, social integration, satisfaction, and institutional commitment. This model

suggests that the process of leaving a social system is a complex one, involving the interaction of these different elements.

These organizational variables highlight the multifaceted nature of students' engagement with the academic institution and underscore the importance of creating supportive and conducive environments for student success. By attending to factors such as academic performance, social integration, and faculty support, institutions can foster a sense of belonging and connectedness among students, enhancing their academic experience and promoting persistence. Additionally, recognizing the significance of organizational variables allows institutions to implement targeted interventions and support services aimed at addressing areas of concern and optimizing the student experience. Through proactive efforts to enhance organizational variables, institutions can cultivate inclusive and supportive learning environments that empower students to thrive academically and personally.

During the interview and transcript analysis, numerous sub-themes were identified within the category of Organization. These sub-themes include: Peer Group Interaction Advisor interaction, Dissertation Support, Faculty Interaction, , Program Support

When asked about the importance of cohort interaction with peers, participants responded with the following:

> Greg: Yeah, for the courses where we did have groups, you know,
> felt that they they all brought something to the group, and, you know,
> just different backgrounds. A lot of them had backgrounds in

curriculum either as a teacher or specialists whereas my background was administration. So it was a little different. But as far as curriculum. I mean, they were very knowledgeable. yeah. I did retire while I was in the program, too. So I know I didn't have all the work responsibilities that they did, too. So you know they certainly had other responsibilities that I didn't have for part of the program.

Fred: Yes youre meeting a lot more about course work. But I also co-author with one of my co-workers. Yeah, we've met about that and continue working together so that does help. So you kind of stick together with your co-author on that.

Edward: There were a couple of online meetings that we had but we never got together like face to face. We would do zoom calls or we would have a collaborative document of some kind and we would all either be writing or sharing a presentation. I know one class, we built a website like a training website. So a lot of the meetings were virtual, either via Zoom or other platforms that other people have.

Did you feel this was helpful in the matriculation through the course work?

Yeah, you know. I think it teaches you that once you collaborate with others that you have to build on each other's strengths, you know. There's gonna be some people that are really good with tech, and some people that not necessarily some people that have are better with research or more detail oriented stuff like that. I think you just have to be able to know how to collaborate with others And you

can't. I learned that early on. And you know, typically at that time, I'll just kind of just go do it on my own. But if anything, that's a good skill to have, because I mean wherever you go. Work you've got to work with other people. Very seldom are you gonna be the only person that's doing everything

Debra: our cohort stuck together, so we followed the same plan as far as classes, and we were on board with taking, you know, 3 classes, every semester in the fall, spring, and 2 for summer, one and 2 for summer, 2, because we wanted to go on a fast path, and we all had all agreed on on supporting each other on that.

Anthony: Not all the time, because there are some even though I'm very free minded and helpful person. I'm always kind to everyone but I do not have any problem with helping or talking or sharing things to other students, regardless of race, religion, and ethnicity. Some students like me very much, and some of them don't. But it's okay. Those who like me very much, they also they share their food, they bring something for me, and they always asking me if I need any help? And everything? One of my friends, when he learned that my car was wrecked. He bought me a new bicycle. So it was a very wonderful connection with those who who was understanding my issues and started helping me from their own perspective or from their own limitations. And still there are some other students who totally didn't like me at all, and they let me feel that I am unwanted

sometimes. They actually do not treat me well and I felt like discrimination. It happens sometimes, but not all the time, but most of the cases like the the friends, the other classmates helped me

Bob: All the time. Okay. so we were a cohort of 10 then one dropped out and I think the hardest thing was when you get to the end course work and into the dissertation. I don't know if this is too much, but time alone is hard.

Carina : Yes, always we had group chats, we did not really meet so much in person, but because it was covid, but definitely virtual. We were always texting. We had a really strong group dynamic but ever since dissertation it's kind of fizzled

Researcher: So into the dissertation proposal writing it kind of just tapered off?

Carina : Yeah. But that's my personal issue. I don't know, like I get. But I would get invites for every Saturday when they meet, you know, certain groups but everyone is totally on their own track. So it's different than when you're in course work. You're all doing the same assignment, and you could talk about it and work on it together. We're all doing totally different studies, and it's helpful to talk about it. But I'd rather work on things alone and try to do it in that way.

Researcher: Do you all sit and exchange ideas and support one another?

Debra: Oh, 3 of us worked in the same school district, but not friends or anything. I mean, we're just colleagues and the other 2, I

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think, had worked together. And then the other guy—just, you know somebody we met there. So no, I mean, it just happened that way where we built that comradery and we were able to continue, you kno. We've all been good with each other, I mean, from supporting resources to outlines to discussions.

 Anthony: Yes, yes, mostly. My friends used to ask me different things regarding the academic assignments, publications, journals, and like submitting the IRB, protocols and stuff and also some of the friends was asking me whether I can help them to collect data for their research project so I never said no to anybody who ever asked me whatever they need I tried my best to help them until today whether they like me or not, it doesn't matter, but I help them.

 Bob: Big time it has, it has to be, because without that support I don't think you can complete it. If you're like somebody that gifted to write to speak. And what have you, then you would do alright. I will always mention my friend who is very knowledgeable and I would just be reading, writing, and struggled through all that.

Is this helpful?

Fred: Absolutely. Yeah. In fact, I was thinking of sending them a draft of the dissertation for feedback.

Anthony: I am long way home and I do not have any relatives here in the United States. My family live in Bangladesh and I am very

busy with my study and workload and stuff. However, at at the end of the day. I need to let out my point of feelings you know, share my experience, thoughts, and ideas with my friends. If I don't do it. It will be like bottled upped in me, and it will create a hotspot inside my mind. So this comradery is very important for a person to maintain not only a social relationship but also for mental peace.

Carina : Yes, I've asked them and they like their accountability. Now they all have the same dissertation chair. That's why they meet but I don't have the same chair as they do. So I don't know. It's kind of what you make it again like I feel like I'm more productive by myself. Meeting with other people, at least, it's some kind of accountability, like, oh, this is what I've gotten done. So yeah.

When asked about the most difficult part of preparing for the dissertation proposal, participants responded with the following:

Greg: Yeah, finding a group to study that aspect of choice, you know. because it isn't often a parent in schools where students get a lot of choice on what they read. A lot of it is pre-programmed, the things they have to read. So you know, trying to find a study group that I could do research on, where there was a large element of choice in what they had to read.

Fred: It was a very original topic. So having to kind of start from from scratch in a lot of ways, and researching different methodologies than I was used to so mainly learning about writing

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history. And you know, maybe long non nonlinear regression models.

Edward: I think it's unwinding a lot of the writing that you've done when you think you're going in one direction, and all of a sudden you get feedback and saying, have you considered this? And this is not really working out? I think you should go this direction. So kind of if you have things mapped out like you kind of wanna stick to it and then have to rewind and say, okay, I'm gonna go this direction instead, because it's a better fit I know my dissertation started off as a narrative inquiry, and now it is a case study. So it was gonna be a mixed research study, quantitative and qualitative, and now I have gone qualitative. So those were lessons that I had and for the better, because I think it would have just prolonged and just made me more stressed out about it. So those were definitely learning experiences.

Debra: The most difficult part for preparing, I think was for preparing for the proposal which was more just what that looked like, you know. Because by that time you already have a lot of your chapters 1, 2, and 3 you're able to share at the proposal. Right? So for me, that wasn't a difficult part. It was more after the proposal for me. Because then it's like, you know, emailing and and asking people to complete your surveys and and that type of thing. So that was more difficult for me.

Anthony: Conceptualizing, especially the research questions and choosing the data and analyze his plan and also data collection. Because. Bangladesh, people speak Banguli, not English. Bengali is their mother tongue, not English, so I had to translate the measurement tools from English to Bangladesh, and then again, then Bangladeshi English. So there was a huge struggle with that however, some Bangladeshi students and professors who are the member of national Rehabilitation, counselling associations Bangladesh chapter. It's good to share that after attending the Conference of National Rehabilitation Counseling Association.

Bob : I'm not saying it was easy. but I managed to present my proposal. And what's good. And I was relieved that I did one part. But then I'm like, okay, I should be able to finish. And then, right after that we had Covid. Then my data suffered and I wasnt able to recover and get back on track to get the data.

Carina : Oh, my God! Definitely the Literature Review. That is like the hardest part because and also just like organizing. Your argument is very hard to do and also just try not to get bogged down and thinking, oh, this has to be the best thing ever. No, it doesn't. It just needs to be like a good dissertation is a done dissertation is what people told me.

When asked about the important qualities or characteristics in a research
supervisor, participants responded with the following:

Greg: But the patience and just the support I know my advisers given me, you know, when I had to step away for a while and they continued to touch base with me to kind of see where I'm at you know, when I presented to her, she would give me feedback. Suggestions for the study too, you know. One other suggestions she gave is to start looking at a groups, trying to find a group where I could study. So she's thinking about our IRB and something easier to do. Some kind of survey of adults, or something about, say, teacher, perception on reading, motivation, or teacher perception on the importance of choice and rating. So you know, just suggestions like that. That you know, help.

Fred: Being a strong advocate, I think, for dissertation chairs. Probably. you know, pretty crucial.

Researcher: Can you elaborate on what advocate means to you?

Fred: Sure, yeah, just being a very supportive role, not only for the dissertation but for the job market for any other prospects that will get that would be to the students benefit. You know, being an advocate in all of those ways, I think, is important.

Edward: I think the most important quality is that they have to be genuine with you. They have to tell you the truth, like, if your writing sucks they need to be able to take that. No sugar coat need anything you know. Just tell me if if I'm going the wrong direction, or if it just doesn't sound good, you know, or it's it's not working out.

So yeah, that's real important. And I've had a couple of those meetings where he told me, and I've always found out my writing can be awesome, you know, whatever I write about. But now he's like, Hey, you need to focus. You need to say it, you know, I get just like the way I talk. I had a lot of words into what I'm describing, because you need to just say, get straight to the point. So I I've been fortunate to have that with my dissertation chair.

Debra: Hmm! I'm trying to find a word, because I think for me would be I don't know. I mean my. I had a great chair, but for me on my end I think I would have liked more structure, you know.

Anthony: Oh, I would have liked to have someone to keep me accountable.always like you could not done this until today? Complete it today. Send it to me. I want to see that, sir. I am working. Please try to understand. And you know, that's sometimes it looks like that. I don't know whether the Supervisor push me intentionally or not, but I sometimes I realize that the supervisor needs to be more patience because I was struggling, and it is truth, and I have explained everything, every situations that I was dealing with at my work and I provided updates and everything. But still the supervisor is not satisfied, and pushing me, pushing me. And it looks like that. They need to have more patience.

Bob: Well. so my committee, is it ok for me to mention them Dr……….. was awesome she was great help and inspiration. Yes.

her style was very difficult. But I was okay. the committee members

she was on the quantitative side and then Dr. ….. was qualitative. So

they all gave me a lot of stuff that that I was able to somewhat focus

on. Your committee selection is important. Thats good and

supportive I cannot say that they were bad this is what they do. They

did it.

Researcher: More patience. Did you appreciate the passion and the push they

gave you?

Anthony: Yeah, that's okay. But sometimes you know when you are

in a extreme level, working and out of nowhere, when your

supervisor is pushing, maybe knowing or unknowing. I don't know

that. It makes me feel like I'm working all the long day. Then it's like

24 hours a day. It is not 30 hours day, so how can I manage more

hours to work more.

Carina : Hmm! Most important. Let me talk about a few for me,

personally, I need someone who the delivery of feedback has to be

very encouraging and helpful. So I'd say I'd say feedback. The way

the delivery of feedback is really one of the most important cause. I

don't do well when someone's gonna tear up my work or my ideas,

I don't do well like that. I also appreciate someone who will help me

manage the timeline and the dates and email me and say, How is it

going? You know? But I've learned it's actually the reverse. I'm the

one that has to be like. Hey! Can you meet with me this week, or

Hey, can you help me with this, and that's hard cause. I don't like

asking for help all the time.

When asked to describe their relationship with their research supervisor,

participants responded with the following:

Greg: Well, I like, I said. I mean. She's accessible you know,

supportive, you know, patient when I you know I had to step away

you know and you know she does give me space. So it you know,

going back to kind of what you said earlier about, you know being

a lonely thing. But it you know it's all on you. So it's it's you know,

when I need her, when you have questions, she's on. She's always

there to provide support. But it it goes back to me, too.

Fred: I had taken him for a course, so I was familiar with him. I did

a course with him back in 2019. But he's been very helpful in in

guiding the research and also in giving quality feedback, especially

for the dissertation proposal.

Edward: It's pretty great, you know, very informal. On how we kind

of talk to each other, and just how he's honest with the feedback.

And I rely a lot on his expertise because he's written a lot of studies,

and he's been a part of a lot of different research around the world.

You know that's kind of the interesting thing is that a lot of our

instructors, our professors. You know, they have global experience.

You know, they either come from another part of the world and are

teaching here, or have been part of research that is global. So I've

leaned on that lens pretty often with them. But yeah, it's a good relationship. I think if it would have been awkward if it was somebody I didn't feel comfortable with, or somebody I didn't really know I had him for 2 classes, so we pretty much knew each other. He knew what to expect from me, you know, just from having me as a student, and then what to expect from the writing.

Anthony: My relationship with my research supervisor is always good and from my end he's very highly liked, you know highly regarded scholar in the different research areas, but also sometimes, like the way that he treats me it seems to me that my local guardian here is taking care of my personal things as well. He is providing me with some guidelines, and that is very helpful for my even job purposes. So I have very good relationship with my research supervisor. Very good and strong relationship, and he is very kind and helpful to me.

Researcher: Why do you think this is? Why do you think this is that he took this interest with you. Is this something it does with everybody?

Anthony: I have noticed he's the type of faculty that doesn't want students confined to the classroom, but he thinks learning should be outside of the classroom too. Other students also shared with me that when they are doing classes with the same professor who is serving as my dissertation chair, they also talk about him nicely. Because that professor is asking them to expand their horizons of

knowledge and build a network by doing research and presenting that research at national conferences. So, these are the same things he is doing with other students as well. It is not with me like but it's also the other students.

Bob: It was very good, because I would meet with her on a weekly basis until I lost the the support of the program. And mainly because I ran out of time and because of Covid.

Carina : She is great. I had her in a few 2 to 3 classes and my during my coursework and I just knew I wanted her to be my chair, because again her lack of a better word. Her energy, I guess, or her way that she is, and she communicates and her delivery of feedback is something that I work really well with actually, I didn't. I cared less about her understanding of my topic, and more about just how she interacts with me and how how she can help me through this project. Cause I knew that would be the hardest part I feel like anyone on our committee can learn your topic. But how are they going to work with you to help you get there is more important than understanding the topic itself.

When asked what state of the doctoral program has been the most difficult, participants responded with the following:

Greg: probably. I mean, the dissertation stage is trying to narrow topic and identify a group to to study you know, especially being out

of schools, too, you know. And you know, that would work with you, or program that would work with you, and even to find a program that had you know, student choice and reading as you know, as a factor or major factor. So.

Fred: For me. The one that was most difficult was probably the the comprehensive exams you know, around year 2.

Edward: Probably the dissertation, the writing itself even though you know it's you're taking elements of previous writing, you know, and your ace exam. Benchmarks like that that are incorporated into it. But it's like taking a big jigsaw puzzle and putting together all the different pieces of the big fit. So yeah, I would definitely say, the dissertation has been, the most difficult of the of the entire process.

Debra: The doctoral program? I would say. Of course, the beginning, because you're swinging into things. But for me it's now been at the end because of the you know.

It's a dissertation. You want to get it right. You want to finish you. The analysis piece was a little bit difficult. Luckily I had a professor that that is, on my committee. That also helped me along the way. So for me, the most difficult has been this last part of it the official dissertation. Right? Because we would do a little bit throughout the course, work. But yeah,

Anthony: Yeah, like the courses related to statistics.

Researcher: Could this have been any different? Could you have been prepared

better for the statistics course?

Anthony: Yes, but I know we, our course designed in such a way like, even though our program is counselling like rehabilitation, counselling however, instead of clinical courses, we have lot of research courses which are fundamentally linked with the statistics in one hand. To become a good researcher, we must know those statistics courses but some of the students are focusing more on clinical sites. They were disinterested in the middle of the course and they left the program.

Bob: the most difficult, and the most stressful was the comps for me.

When asked about presenting or attending at conferences, participants responded with the following:

Greg: No.

Researcher: Have you been encouraged to do this?

Greg: To submit papers to like journals. you know some of the things I've done for classes had a couple of professors suggest that I submit it you know, to work on it, you know. yeah, we're an editor with, you know, with the journal, but I haven't done that.

Fred: Yes, sir. Usually, I try to do at least one every year. So far I've done about 4 or 5.

Edward: I did a proposal for a class for a conference in that was interesting, and I think the process was just to submit a proposal not

to actually go. But I think some people went so I had that experience. Oddly enough, I had co-presented at a conference prior to the doctoral program in my master's program with one of my professors, and it was a state conference here in Texas. So I've had that experience. That professor recommended me to go and co-present with her, and the recommendation was to go on and get my doctorate.

Debra: no nor encouraged.

Anthony: My current research topic? I haven't had an opportunity to present anywhere. However, I have submitted a research proposal in a Symposium, a national rehabilitation, counselling symposium which will be organized by University of Wisconsin Medicine. They have accepted my research proposal to present in April.

Bob: I have done it before. But the topic that was not something I did.

Researcher: How often have you?

Anthony: Yeah, I have presented many topics such as hope and resilience. Last year I presented on social justice. I have presented on attitudes and experiences even I have presented on Internet addiction So I have variety of topics and I like to attend conferences.

Researcher: Were you encouraged to do this.

Anthony: Yes my chair is always a very encouraging figure to me about conferences from the beginning, and still there, if there is any conference is going to be happened, he just let me know that. No, there will be a conference who would like to present.

Bob : yes that was part of where I worked, you know we had to. Not everybody didn't but if you had the desire to I went nationwide on a first year Seminar for college students. So I did that you know, that would have been a topic of welcome. I did it and I did other technical conference presentations as well. So I have a handful of that.

Researcher: Could it have been any different?

Carina : I don't know. I don't know how to compare it. I don't know how other universities like how their programs work. If I knew, maybe I could say. I guess just like it really feels like after you pass. Your ace exam feels like totally isolated. and if there was a way to change that, I don't know how but to implement something where it's like monthly as a program something then that would be way helpful. Maybe they do. And I just didn't know about it.

Attitude

The attitudinal construct offers a subjective lens through which to interpret students' objective educational experiences within doctoral programs. As students enroll in these programs, they bring with them a predetermined set of attitudes towards the program and the institution, which may evolve and be shaped by their subsequent

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experiences throughout the academic journey. Bean (1982) outlines a range of attitudinal variables encompassing aspects such as the practical value of one's education, occupational certainty, educational goals, and loyalty to the institution. These attitudes reflect students' perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding their academic pursuits and the significance of their educational experiences within the broader context of their personal and professional aspirations.

By examining attitudinal variables, researchers and institutions gain insights into the motivations, expectations, and satisfaction levels of doctoral students, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their experiences and behaviors. Attitudinal variables provide a window into students' engagement with their academic program, their sense of purpose and direction, and their commitment to the institution. Understanding these attitudes enables institutions to tailor their support services, academic programming, and institutional policies to better meet the needs and preferences of students, ultimately fostering a more positive and fulfilling educational experience. Additionally, by acknowledging the dynamic nature of attitudinal variables, institutions can implement strategies to cultivate a supportive and engaging academic environment that promotes student success and well-being throughout the doctoral journey.

During the interview and transcript analysis, numerous sub-themes were identified within the category of attitude. These sub-themes include Attitude, Persistence, Procrastination-Academic, Decisional, Difficulty, Time Management, Values of One's Education

> Anthony: After completing my doctoral degree, I now realize that I
>
> would recommend every person at least if they don't do anything in

their life, they need to do a doctoral degree whatever the area they choose. Because this degree is such a degree, it not only create a good prospect for a good professional job market, but also intellectually. This degree helps to expand the horizon of knowledge and get lot of his skills critical thinking. And you know, logic and stuff. And you know you name it. So this is a valuable degree and as this degree is creating a very efficient and effective person who can accomplish any task in the job market related to the degree. So I feel that this degree is valuable in the job market, and I can see the huge prospect even though if I don't apply, I can do the private practice. and in our society the title is also a great value because when I have only my name, like maybe. then people will not debate much. Give me hell on my name. But when I have Doctor …… , that will carry a lot of weight in the society.

Persistence

Researcher: Thank you. Now I want you to think back to when you were doing your coursework for the doctorate when your coursework was due. How did you organize your time?

Fred: A lot of late nights for me? So yeah, just having to stay up late. I was kind of like a night owl.

Researcher: Thank you. Describe a normal work week on your dissertation.

Fred: Sure. So I would say, I picked about. you know anywhere from from 4, 3 to 4 h on it per day. On Wednesdays I usually go a little bit

heavier, and do maybe you know, anywhere from 12 to 15. So in

total I would say anywhere for about 30 h, approximately per week.

Researcher: Thank you. Some people describe the process of working on the dissertation

as a lonely process, or one where they feel isolated. What has been your experience?

Fred: I haven't felt that so much I think you know, research is is is

like that, you know, in a lot of ways, whether it's a dissertation or

not. I wouldn't say a dissertation feels particularly lonely compared

to other forms of research. In fact you know you have the committee.

You also have your chair so in a ways you kind of have a lot of

people to bounce ideas off of as opposed to, maybe having just one

or 2 co-authors. So if anything, I think it's more of a collaborative

effort in that way.

Greg: Yeah, I mean, yeah, it's about you. I mean, it's and no one

else, I mean, no matter how supportive your by advisor is, it'sIt

comes down to you, and you know the time you put into it, and you

know how committed you are to it. And you know, for different

reasons, you may be committed to it. But yeah, I mean, it's I guess

it would be lonely in that sense. But it yeah, it's supposed to be about

you. you know, and you know you should be finding purpose in what

you're doing. You know, for whatever reason, whatever that is, if it's

career advancement or you know the love of the topic, and and it

can be both. It doesn't have to be one or the other. And there are

probably other reasons, too, you know.

Researcher: How long had you been in the program when your dissertation proposal was accepted?

> Carina: I started in January 2020, and I had my proposal. December 2023. almost about to be 4 academic years for me which honestly, it hasn't taken too long, like 2 semesters. I really didn't do anything. I had a lot of family stuff. After I finish my coursework I had some deaths in the family. I had some things that got me sidetracked so I just paid for my semester still, but I didn't do anything, so I think I could have been done a lot sooner. I think I could have probably graduated by now if I had applied myself.

Researcher: some people describe the process of working on the dissertation as a lonely process, or one where the where they feel isolated. Has this been your experience.

> Debra: I would say it wasn't really during dissertation time I would have to go back and say it was mainly coursework like the comps and proposal and then from there I do think that we still communicated. But we didn't get together for the writing. No so it was just people at different paces at that point.

Researcher: So would you characterize it as a lonely process?

> I think. Yeah, I think for the dissertation other than you having your chair. And and again, be you kind of like Now I have my own topic. I can't really ask my colleague. You know they have their own topic and their own chair it. It kind of separates things because you have your own writing to do so it it is a little lonely at that point, because

again, it's so open to not having deadlines, if that makes sense, you

know. But yeah, we didn't. We didn't like it after proposal. We would

just talk about, you know what was going on or what not, but there

wasn't any more group sessions or anything for writing.

Researcher: And did you ever withdraw from the University?

Edward: No that was one non-negotiable, I said for myself, no, drop it out.

Researcher: cause you said you took some time off. You said you took some time off but were you. Still, you were still enrolled.

Edward: Right? Exactly. Yeah. You know it. Oddly, it was before I

started the dissertation process, like people would tell me like, Oh,

I'm taking, you know, 2 classes in the summer. I'm not even going

in the summer at all. You know I took breaks in between because I

just I needed it, and I need to. Those breaks were not during spring

or fall. They were in the summer. I think I took one fall off, but all

of them were in the summer and, oddly enough my travel picks up

in the summer cause I go to a lot of conferences, and you know we're

doing a lot of professional development for school districts and stuff

like that, cause they're doing their summer pd. So summers were

crazy for me, so that, like, I try not to go summers at all.

Researcher: So with all these distractions floating around, how do you maintain interest

in the topic.

Edward: You know it. It's always there, like a cloud hovering over

me. It doesn't go away. It's always in the back of my mind. I'm

always thinking about it. I'm always thinking about. What am I

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missing? What can I add to it? So it it it's it's just, you know, part of part of me. you know, carrying, carrying this with me. So it's gonna be odd when I'm done with it. I'm gonna have that need, you know. Maybe I'll do another research. Go for another program. I don't know. What am I gonna do? Once I'm done with this.

Decisional Procrastination

Researcher: So did you set yourself given that you were traveling. You were all over the place did you set yourself a schedule?

Greg: it's the last, you know, 3, 4 days, and then do it, or a little a little of both of them. I wasn't as organized as you laid out initially. But but yeah, certainly the week to week, you know. Doing those things definitely. But then, looking ahead, you know what I needed to do for this, the thing that was gonna be due you know, 3 weeks later, and and a lot of group work, too. I know there's a big emphasis on that, too. So you know, having to get together schedule meetings with your partners for presentations, you know, those things you had to do you know, between sessions also. So oh, okay.

Researcher: In preparing for this proposal, can you describe a normal work week when working on your proposal as opposed to course work.

 Greg: Well, this would. I mean, it's kind of been spaced out some I've done more on it this semester Then last semester you know, because of family reasons but, like, you know, this semester, you know, even with the part time position, you know, it could be, you

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know, a couple of hours a day, you know, devoting that to the paper.
The research, you know, in the morning you know, trying to keep a
schedule you know that that I'm making progress on it.

Anthony: Sometimes when I felt bad and I felt really very tired and
and then I totally took myself out of the world like take rest.

Researcher: Did you establish your schedule that would allow for you to complete your
assignments on time? Or would you put them off until the last minute, or both?

Carina: I'd say. Mostly I would always. I think. I remember 2 times
I had to ask ask for an extension by one day, but mostly I did. I'm
not. I may be a little bit of procrastinator, but not really horribly like
that, like I'd wait till the weekends, but then I'd get it done over the
weekend and then I'd always be like it was sorry. That was your
planned time. You weren't like a yeah, that was my plan time.

But then I'd look back like Dang, why don't I do this during the
week? So there was a little bit of both, but never really feeling like.
totally overwhelmed with with the workload

Researcher: Are you often distracted by other more interesting things when you try to get
work done on your dissertation.

Debra: Yes, again, because I could have finished last summer. You
know, I got my data in May of last year and so I thought, man,
summer one. I'm gonna hit my my second part of dissertation and
finish summer. But it's just, you know things come up. My daughter
has a basketball tournament. I want to be there, too. Oh, this is kind

of flexible. They're giving us a leeway to still be in the program. So you I did tend to kind of like. That's what I meant about when I said at the very beginning, I did tend to stall because I was. I didn't have that strict deadline anymore. And yes, it was money. But it was almost like the usual thing I was paying anyways.

Researcher: So did you set yourself given that you were traveling. You were all over the place did you set yourself a schedule?

Edward: Yeah, I tried to, you know, and sometimes the best late plan don't always work out, because sometimes I would get pull. Yeah, I would get pulled into a meeting, or I'd have to fly somewhere else and cover for somebody else. So stuff like that so a lot of times it it was not consistent.

And now I try to plan things out. And those are the things that I learned to kind of deal with later on, and did not procrastinate as much and take care of what I need to early on, so that I didn't get behind it all when something was due. You know, Major Deadline. So that was that was definitely something I had to learn the hard way early on. And I'll tell you, Jacob. I did not attend a couple of semesters, you know. This is why it's taking me so long to finish the program. I finished my coursework. But I'm at the proposal stage right now for my dissertation, but I probably skipped out about 3 or 4 semesters and a couple of summers. I didn't go at all, cause my travel was just crazy.

Researcher: Are you often distracted by other more interesting things when you try to get work done on your dissertation?

Edward: Totally social media TV, the VR headset, you know. I laugh because I think I had an easier time riding during my master's program, because there wasn't as many distractions as there is now something going on, people always inviting you to something. So yeah, it it's been. It's been difficult.

Time Management

Researcher: Would you consider yourself a procrastinator or did you have structured in your in your life?

Fred: I will try to do it as soon as possible. Especially like there was always research papers that were part of the classes. I will try to do those asap and get the idea, set work, flush them out early. So I think I was pretty good at planning.

Researcher: Thank you. Describe a normal work week on your dissertation.

Fred: Sure. So I would say, I picked about. you know anywhere from from 3 to 4 h on it per day. On Wednesdays I usually go a little bit heavier, and do maybe you know, anywhere from 12 to 15. So in total I would say anywhere for about 30 h, approximately per week.

Researcher: thank you. How do you maintain interest in the topic?

Fred: I have 3 different sections. so sometimes I jump back and forth to get you know, and they're kind of each covering a different aspect of my research topics. Actually, just something between sections of

the dissertation allows me to to. you know, you know. Keep keep you know, like a like a wide area of interest covered.

make it a standard so that I can get a good grade. And it was taking lot of my time and at the same time I used to cook my own food and I was not managing time to cook my own food as well. So then I started taking counseling for time management and there was a lunch and learn program that happening in the College of Business school. And I attended that program and that program is totally focusing on time management skills. So the first sentence I still can't remember.

The Professor was telling that time management is the key to success and that helped me to change my whole perspective regarding time management. And since then I tried to be like you know, to a specific time like if I said, I have to do it by 8 0'clock. I became a man of now!

Anthony: I was not, honestly speaking, consistent with the time.

Researcher: Are you often distracted by other more interesting things when you were trying to get work done on your dissertation.

Carina: Oh, my God, yes, I look outside. It's sunny. I want to go outside. I want to be by the pool I just have to tell myself I'm almost done. I'm almost done.

Debra: Yes, again, because I could have finished last summer. You know, I got my data in May of last year and so I thought, man,

summer one. I'm gonna hit my my second part of dissertation and finish summer. But it's just, you know things come up. My daughter has a basketball tournament. I want to be there, too. Oh, this is kind of flexible. They're giving us a leeway to still be in the program. So you I did tend to kind of like. That's what I meant about when I said at the very beginning, I did tend to stall because I was. I didn't have that strict deadline anymore. And yes, it was money. But it was almost like a usual thing I was paying anyways.

Researcher: and during the course when course work was due for your courses. how did you organize your time?

Edward: For me, it was interesting, because at the time when I started my coursework i was traveling, I would probably travel 3 or 4 days out of the week, so I was on planes and rental cars and hotel rooms. You know I was not home. So in some regards it was conducive for me to get on an online class because I was already away from home. I didn't have any distractions, so I could just focus on that. But then, in in some other respects, you know, when projects and and papers were due when writing was due. It. It got a little bit challenging, because sometimes I was traveling, and I needed just some desk time to be able to work on this project. So time management was very critical. Sometimes it impacted me where I didn't turn into the best work that I thought I could and it's sometimes, some ways it. It was positive impact. Because, you

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know, I was somewhere. I didn't have any distractions, and I could just focus on the work and have the flexibility of the fact that the the program is online, I think, really helped out because I could pick when, during the week that the class house taken would be, you know, and I could go ahead from there.

Researcher: *So did you set yourself given that you were traveling. You were all over the place did you set yourself a schedule?*

Edward : Yeah, I tried to, you know, and sometimes the best late plan don't always work out, because sometimes I would get pulle into a meeting, or I'd have to fly somewhere else and cover for somebody else. So stuff like that so a lot of times it it was not consistent.

And now I try to plan things out. And those are the things that I learned to kind of deal with later on, and did not procrastinate as much and take care of what I need to early on, so that I didn't get behind it all when something was due. You know, Major Deadline. So that was that was definitely something I had to learn the hard way early on. And I'll tell you, Jacob. I did not attend a couple of simple semesters, you know. This is why it's taking me so long to to finish the program. I finished my coursework. But I'm I'm at the proposal stage right now for my dissertation, but I probably skipped out about 3 or 4 semesters couple of summers. They didn't go at all, cause I just you know my travel was just crazy.

Researcher: *describe a normal week of work on your dissertation.*

Edward: It's a mix. So I'm a early. I'm in the 5 am club, so if I've

got my coffee and I'm ready to go and everybody still asleep, and

the work world hasn't woken up yet. Yeah, I'll crank up an hour, 2

hr early morning like 5 am to 7 am. And then start getting ready for

the work. And you know I'm a weekend warrior as well, you know.

I'll carve out 4, 6, 8 hrs on a Saturday or on a Sunday, and I just

like myself from my office and just crank it out. So it just depends

on how much I'll wanting to do that day if I'm just rewriting a

chapter or not, but like a section of a chapter. You know, I'll kind of

take those 2 hrs. But if I'm doing like a complete write up like, if

I'm writing to starte the beginnings of a chapter, then I'll take like a

Saturday or Sunday and just break it out.

Researcher :. How did you maintain interest in the topic

Bob: Well, the school had a good initiative to run this particular

process, and I think we had a good system. because of covid It

dropped off, and then it came back and when it dropped off. That's

when I needed it (the support) And I finally came back. And well, I

was close. I think my work really interfered with that (completing

the dissertation) because I wouldn't touch it at work and you're not

suppose to right? Okay, I didn't. I don't blame work for that but I

do blame the supervisor over activities that it would be done after

hours that I think Interfered. They'ed say, "When you didn't finish

it, you got finish it by tonight." stuff like that.

Values of One's Education

Researcher: Did academic tasks take longer for you to complete than you expected. or were you pretty much on point?

Edward: Pretty much on point I think, where I struggled was when I didn't have the structure of a classc Specifically, the dissertation course, like, Okay, I'm on my own. I have to make my own schedule for writing. And I think that's where I got I fell behind a little bit versus, okay, this is the deadline. This is what it is So I kind of miss that, and I had to learn how to self regulate myself.

Researcher: Do you feel that? I mean. do you talk to others that are doing it by themselves. And how does that differ to what you and your co-author are doing?

Fred: I haven't met anybody that does solo. But I do also have an online group of Latino and African American students. In that group we schedule meetings where we get together and and and can participate and share ideas.

Researcher: Was that something you all just put together? Or is that nationally state wide? Is that something that the Department pushed you guys to do or introduce to you.

Fred: It's part of a national, not for profit called Ph.D. project. And that's that's real popular in business programs and business ph, d, programs so this this group It's a national, not for profit founded by a big accounting firm called KPMG.

Intent

In this context, attitudes toward the academic experience and its anticipated outcomes are expected to influence the intent to continue in the doctoral program. The concept of intent was introduced as a crucial variable by Bean (1980, 1982) who identified a strong predictive relationship between intent to leave and actual attrition rates. This notion aligns closely with Tinto's (1975) measures of institutional commitment, where the intent to leave signifies a lack of commitment to the academic institution. According to their theory, attitudes shape individuals' intentions, which, in turn, influence their subsequent behaviors.

By examining the interplay between attitudes, intent, and behavior, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms driving students' decisions regarding program continuation or attrition. Attitudes toward the academic experience, such as perceived value, satisfaction, and alignment with personal goals, are likely to shape students' intentions to persist or withdraw from the program. Understanding the mediating role of intent allows institutions to identify potential points of intervention and develop targeted strategies to enhance student retention and success. By addressing factors influencing students' attitudes and intentions, institutions can cultivate a supportive and engaging academic environment that fosters a sense of commitment and belonging, ultimately promoting positive outcomes for doctoral students.

During the interview and transcript analysis, numerous sub-themes were identified within the category of Intent. These sub-themes include educational & occupational intentions, mindset, personal goals.

Researcher: Thank you. Some people describe the process of working on the dissertation as a lonely process, or one where they feel isolated. What has been your experience?

Fred: I haven't felt that so much. I think you know, research is like that, you know, in a lot of ways, whether it's a dissertation or not. A dissertation feels particularly lonely compared to other forms of research. In fact you know you have the committee. You also have your chair. So in a way you kind of have a lot of people to bounce ideas off of as opposed to, maybe having just one or 2 co-authors. So if anything, I think it's more of a collaborative effort in that way.

Researcher: Thank you. Are you often distracted by other more interesting things when you try to get work done on your dissertation?

Fred: No.

Researcher: How do you maintain interest in the topic?

Fred: I have 3 different sections. so sometimes I jump back and forth to get you know, and they're kind of each covering a different aspect of my research topics. Actually, just something between sections of the dissertation allows me to to. you know, you know. Keep keep you know, like a like a wide area of interest covered.

Researcher: you started the program. Did you expect to complete the dissertation? On time?

Fred: Yes, sir

Researcher: next one is, do you think you're complete in time?

Greg: Well, you're on your own schedule, I think, at this point pretty much

Researcher: academic preparedness on your part? Has it been the inner desire. Intrinsic motivation extrinsic.

Greg: Yeah probably the desire. You know, the desire to eventually finish and And this topic, too, which you know continues to interest me and yeah, the the support of I guess professors to you know, especially my advisor. I have been in regular contact with her. So I'm working with her this year as a graduate student with this research project. So you know that is helpful to have it. I mean, even even though I am behind it. It's something that we discuss we talk about. And it's something that I need to finish. There's no distance or time between me and the program, or me and the advisor, where I think that's where some people may drift off and you know other things happen. You know in your life you could get sick and you put it aside. You never go back to so yeah, even when I had to step away, you know, with with some family things last year, I was still involved somehow just on some level if you know what I mean, but there wasn't a complete separation. There was still contact and thinking about it like 2 or 3 days totally. And then I just only thought about the dissertations working styles, that how what I'm doing. My mind worked but physically I was detached. So in that way, it is very hard to tell. Like how persistent I was.

Researcher: What has made you advance through the program.

Carina: I guess just my passion for learning and education and the will to get through this, seeing the light at the end of the tunnel that I'll have my doctorate degree, and whatever that means, I'll have it. So that's what's getting me through just being done having my life back.

Researcher: When it comes to prioritization of schoolwork and personal life, how do you manage?

Debra: Yeah. So so I remember the program when we had our intro, or the the welcome, or even the consideration, before we got into the program. I remember they made it very clear that this is gonna be a very strenuous program and that it was, gonna take a lot of work you were gonna have to create a schedule. You're gonna have to really lay out how you were. Gonna manage your time for doctoral studies with still having a job and your family and all that. So I remember them stating it very clear. So that really was a determining factor? You know I had to think about. Okay, am I going to be able to do this and really still be able to be? You know, the principal that I am, the mother and all that. So as far as prioritizing, I think with school and with my work, I should say in school. It was fairly easy, because I already knew and they had already told us, you're gonna have to balance and prioritize. So for me wasn't really a big deal now. Was it a lot and a lot of work? Yes, but I had to really manage my Times

on Saturdays and Sundays, and in the evenings to to really make sure that I had time focused to my schoolwork.

Researcher: And again, well, when did you? When when you started the program? Did you think you would? Complete it on time?

Debra: Yes.

Researcher: you're completing the time. Or at this point, you're looking at completing on your new deadline.

Debra: Yes, on track. And actually, you know, when they say it's a 4 year program. So I would say, yes, I'm ahead in my head. Still 4 years would be at the end of this year.

Researcher: So with all these distractions floating around, how do you maintain interest in the topic.

Edward You know it. It's always there, like a cloud hovering over me. It doesn't go away. It's always in the back of my mind. I'm always thinking about it. I'm always thinking about. What am I missing? What can I add to it? So it's just, you know, part of part of me. you know, carrying, carrying this with me. So it's gonna be odd when I'm done with it. I'm gonna have that need, you know. Maybe I'll do another research. Go for another program. I don't know. What am I gonna do?

Researcher: When did you expect to complete your dissertation?

Bob : Well, the expectation was to try to finish the course work, and that was the struggle it hurt. When you're part-time. You're only taking 2 courses at the time person that's not not include summer. I figured it out in 5 years. You know I could. And that's something good, I have the papers that I wrote but coursework is coursework, you know. when your in class and you have to do the coursework, you do it.

Whether it's a research paper or some other presentation. we'll you get it done.

And high pressure and the dissertation, right? But course working is something different

Anthony: I had to go through a lot of like, you know, problems, because understanding the assignment and finding good resources for the assignment, and then applying those different resources on my assignment and make it a standard so that I can get a good grade. And it was taking lot of my time lot of my time, and at the same time I used to cook my own food and I was not managing time to cook my own food as well. So and then I started taking counseling for time management and there was a learn lunch and learn program was happening in the Business College of business school. And I attended that program. And that program is totally focusing on time management skills. So the first sentence I still can't remember.

The professor was telling me that time management is the key to success. and that helped me to change my whole perspective regarding time management. And since then and since then I tried to be like you know, to a specific time like if I said, I have to do it by 8 0'clock. 8 0'clock.

Chapter IV Summary of findings

In this chapter, the researcher examined patterns of persistence and lived experiences of doctoral students at a Hispanic Serving Institution in deep south Texas. Data was collected from individual semi-structured interviews that identified key themes, issues, or discussion points embedded in the transcript (Creswell, 2007). Participants were selected using purposeful criterion sampling for effective identification and selection of information rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were solicited and recruited through their program that matched the phenomenon, over the age of 18, core complete, and at least one to two years into their dissertation. By utilizing an established instrument (Grosjean, 1975) with predefined themes, the study ensured a comprehensive exploration of the factors influencing doctoral students' educational journeys. The researcher interviewed seven students to gain insight into their educational experience, their environment, the institution, their attitude, and intent.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This researcher examined what contributes and hinders persistence in doctoral studies, and what were the lived experiences of doctoral students in a Hispanic Serving Institution. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a thorough examination of each transcript to obtain valuable insights into the specific issue being studied (Kallio et al., 2016).

Research Questions

The following research questions were intended to guide the researcher in the conduct of this study.

1. What are the most important factors contributing to persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?

2. What are the most important factors hindering persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution?

Summary of Findings

All seven participants in this study were doctoral students that were core complete and one to two years into their dissertation writing. The data collected through these interviews provided a rich narrative of patterns of persistence and lived experience of

these doctoral students. Participants stated issues that rose during the process such as an awareness of the dissertation process, lack of experience in writing a publication and what it entails, as well as working without deadlines or communication did prove to be difficult at times. However, in some cases experiences that proved to be helpful in completion were working with coauthors, regular meetings with advisors, regular feedback, as well as maintaining contact with doctoral students at the same pace as well as those that where ahead of them to provide support and guidance.

Elliot et al. (2020), stated it has been observed that certain students who opt to undertake a doctoral degree may lack awareness of the extensive and intricate realm of academia, as well as the requisite support mechanisms essential for successful completion. Participants stated that even though it was initially discussed at recruitment, they were unaware of what was in store for them. The interaction between the official curriculum and the hidden curriculum has a crucial role in both academic achievement and personal development, as highlighted by Elliot et al. (2020). Students sometimes face various challenges and hardships in pursuit of their education, including the need to relocate their families, incur financial obligations, and invest emotionally in their academic endeavors which for some became a factor but did not impede their success. Failure to complete their education can have detrimental effects on individuals, leading to psychological and familial difficulties, as well as a significant financial burden with limited prospects for job advancement.

Attrition rates for doctoral (Ph.D.) students in the United States vary depending on time and study but are cited at approximately fifty percent for residential programs

(Pittman, 2003; Fiore, 2019) and considerably higher for online programs, ranging from 50 to 70 percent (Rigler et al., 2011, as cited in Terrel et al., 2012). Approximately 40,000 Ph.D. students across all fields are lost each year because they have not completed their planned degree. This accounts for nearly half of the students who first started a program (Garner, 2008; Girves & Wemmerus, 1998).

The researcher employed a case study to comprehensively examine the patterns of persistence and lived experience of Ph.D. and Ed.D. students, with the intent of facilitating the successful completion of their doctoral programs. Yin (2003) contends that conducting many case studies is an effective method for gaining a comprehensive understanding of a certain phenomenon.

This study focused on each student educational experience, their environment, the institution, their attitude, and intent. The results suggested that program interventions such faculty and program integration, academic advisement, structured writing sessions to support doctoral students through the dissertation development and completion phase. College students require mentoring, and this applies equally to doctoral students (Brill et al., 2014). Research has shown that effective monitoring is a key determinant of students' success in the Ph.D. study process (Bartelse et al., 2007; Lee, 2008; Leijen et al. 2014; Ives & Rowley 2005).

Greg responded with the following when asked to clarify his statement that his chair was supportive and met regularly.

> Well, we had, you know, standing appointments, too, so it
> was every 2 weeks you know, we would meet to kind of
> discuss where I was at with the research or note taking. She

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gave me items to have by that next meeting, or just a check

in, just to check in kind of where where I was at, and then

she would provide feedback. On emails, yeah, she was

pretty quick in responding.

Interviews also uncovered students were more successful when advisors met

regularly and held students accountable with deadlines and expectations. Experienced

and skilled supervisors usually schedule regular meetings with their students, closely

evaluate their progress, and offer advice tailored to the specific needs of each student and

their dissertation (Leijen et al., 2014). Debra added that she found that a structured

professor is an important characteristic of a research supervisor. As cited in Leijen et al.

(2014), Manathunga (2005) asserts that supervision includes a teaching component,

meaning that students might not automatically understand all intricacies of the research

game. Doctoral students should be helped in this regard. Edward also cited the success

of a structured environment in keeping him accountable.

> Edward: yeah, So the dissertation course in my program has an
>
> outline that has descriptions of each chapter and section that goes
>
> within it. Professors reviewed the template, and I was also
>
> encouraged to look at other dissertations that were out there and kind
>
> of did the same in the same topic area of education. So that I had
>
> that frame of reference. So I kind of knew the structure and got to
>
> see how different people kinda put it together. So yeah, that'll that
>
> all came in very handy.

> Debra who was successful also would like to see monthly check ins
> for reassurance.

> Debra: I don't know. I don't know how to compare it. I don't know
> how other universities like how their programs work. If I knew,
> maybe I could say. I guess just like it really feels like after you pass.
> Your ace exam feels like totally isolated. and if there was a way to
> change that, I don't know how but to implement something where
> it's like monthly as a program something then that would be way
> helpful. Maybe they do. And I just didn't know about it.

Bain et al. (2011) state students with a favorable student advisor relationship experienced a higher level of persistence and degree completion.

Theoretical Framework Summary

This study is grounded on Tinto's (1993) theory of student persistence as its theoretical framework. Student perseverance is a significant issue in higher education (Reason, 2009, Smith et al., 2006). According to Tinto (1975), students exhibit persistence when they effectively assimilate both academically and socially into the college setting. Several scholarly articles have investigated student retention and attrition by employing Tinto's theoretical framework of persistence. Tinto's (1975) thesis posits that active engagement of students in both the social and academic domains is important for the successful attainment of a degree. Devos et al. (2017) discovered that doctorate students who withdrew from the program before finishing their degree cited institutional, social, and cultural reasons as barriers to completion. Devos et al. (2017) discovered that

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academic integration become more challenging for pupils who were unable to integrate socially.

Research indicates that when students encounter obstacles in their academic journey, assistance and motivation from their teachers can help them to overcome these setbacks and move on. According to Anderson (1981), pleasure is defined as the process of college integration. Sociology has conventionally associated satisfaction and integration with the act of retaining. The instructor's provision of guidance and tangible resources, such as advice and information, will instill a sense of confidence in students regarding their academic performance and ability to handle the challenges of university work. Consequently, this will result in elevated levels of self-efficacy among students (Nielsen et al., 2017). Astin (1975) proposed that a student's likelihood of withdrawing from college is inversely correlated with their level of active engagement in the institution's academic and social activities. Tinto (1987) incorporated the concepts of social and intellectual integration into Durkheim's theory of solidarity in order to enhance his theory of student retention.

Vincent Tinto (1975) initially presented his model explaining the factors that drive undergraduate student attrition rates. Despite the model's evolution over time, the basic framework has remained crucial and influential in the contemporary examination of persistence and retention. Tinto's concept is based on two fundamental principles: academic integration and social integration. According to Tinto, these principles have a mutually dependent and interconnected impact on student persistence. According to Spady's model (1970), the decision to leave a specific social system is influenced by various factors such as family and educational background, academic potential,

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normative congruence, friendship support, intellectual development, grade performance, social integration, satisfaction, and institutional commitment. This model suggests that the process of leaving a social system is a complex one, involving the interaction of these different elements.

Enhancing faculty members' comprehension of the significance of the advisor or mentor connection with students is crucial for cultivating effective advisor or mentoring practices (Brill et al., 2014; Cockrell et al., 2011). Instructors have a significant impact on students' academic and social integration through their decisions on course and program content, supervision, teaching methods, learning tactics, and assessment techniques (Tinto, 1975, 1993). The academic and social integration of students relies on the suitability of course and program materials, teaching and learning methods, and assessment methodologies to meet their individual needs such pre-entry attributes, objectives and initial commitments, experience with the university system, integration, objectives and emerging commitments and results.

Conclusions

In his work, Simpson (1987) asserts that the inquiry into the factors that contribute to success in graduate school remains a topic of interest. However, most research on this subject focuses on the overall success rates, such as the proportion of individuals who enter doctoral programs and achieve success.

After thoroughly analyzing the five identified themes - Background, Environment, Organization, Attitude, and Intent, it became evident that all seven participants unanimously recognized the pivotal role of three main constructs in facilitating the completion of doctoral studies: Environment, Organization, and Attitude.

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The environmental subthemes that emerged encompassed aspects such as work, family dynamics, financial obligations, and the significance of mentorship. These themes collectively underscored the interconnectedness between environmental issues and various spheres of individuals' lives. The organizational subthemes that surfaced included the dynamics of advisor relationships, committee interactions, peer group dynamics, as well as the crucial roles of program and financial support within the context of the organization. The attitudinal subthemes that evolved encompassed attributes such as persistence, personal motivation, and effective time management strategies, highlighting key psychological factors influencing individuals' approach to their endeavors. These constructs were consistently highlighted as crucial pillars that provide support and guidance to doctoral students throughout their academic journey.

The Bean's Student Attrition Model focuses on the impact of external factors, such as environmental influences, on attitudes and decision-making processes. These factors encompass students' economic situation, familial obligations, and employment position, all of which might directly impact the likelihood of dropping out (Bean 1982). Tinto (1982) emphasizes the difficulty of managing the roles of being a student alongside other obligations, such as familial duties, highlighting the intricate interaction between academic endeavors and daily life. The expectation for students to fulfill both roles simultaneously might lead to disputes and tensions that hinder their ability to stay focused on their studies.

The environment encompasses the broader academic, social, and institutional context within which students operate, including access to resources and support services. Organization refers to the structured approach and management of academic programs,

ensuring clarity in expectations and timelines. Finally, Attitude reflects the mindset, determination, and resilience exhibited by students in confronting challenges and persisting towards their academic goals, underlining the indispensable role of a positive outlook in the pursuit of doctoral studies. Tinto's theory (1975) related to academic activities seem to support the environment and organization construct but not the attitude construct, whereas the theory related to social activities were not as all supported. Academic integration is crucial for doctorate students, whereas social integration, which is significant for undergraduates, does not directly contribute to doctoral attrition (Cassuto, 2013; Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001).

Through the collective insights of the participants, it is evident that these three core constructs play pivotal roles in shaping the doctoral student experience and ultimately contributing to their successful completion of the program. By recognizing and addressing the importance of the Environment, Organization, and Attitude, institutions and support networks can better tailor their resources and strategies to empower doctoral candidates, fostering an environment conducive to academic achievement and personal growth.

Implications

The examination of patterns of persistence and lived experiences among doctoral students at a Hispanic Serving Institution has yielded invaluable insights that transcend mere observations; they serve as a beacon guiding future endeavors in academia. These emergent themes, meticulously extracted from the rich tapestry of student narratives, stand poised to become a template of success, illuminating the pathways toward fostering academic achievement and personal growth within similar contexts. By delving into the

nuanced fabric of these experiences, we uncover not only the challenges faced but also the triumphs celebrated along the doctoral journey. This comprehensive understanding serves as a foundational framework upon which institutions can build strategies to enhance support systems, foster inclusivity, and propel students toward successful completion of their doctoral studies.

Central to the significance of these emergent themes is their ability to shed light on the areas where our programs and faculty excel in nurturing the academic and personal development of doctoral students. Through the lens of these experiences, we gain a deeper appreciation for the multifaceted support structures that underpin student success. From mentorship programs to institutional resources, the insights gleaned from this study underscore the importance of cultivating environments that are conducive to growth, resilience, and achievement. Recognizing and amplifying these successes not only validates the efforts of dedicated faculty and staff but also provides a roadmap for sustained excellence in doctoral education.

Furthermore, the researcher's adept use of reflective questioning has yielded actionable insights that hold promise for catalyzing positive change within our programs. By engaging participants in thoughtful dialogue and introspection, the researcher has identified potential interventions and support mechanisms that can be piloted or implemented to address areas of need. From targeted mentoring initiatives to enhanced academic advisement, these interventions hold the potential to empower students, mitigate challenges, and foster a culture of academic success. As we embark on the next phase of our journey, armed with the knowledge gleaned from this study, we are poised to

enact meaningful change that will resonate throughout our academic community, transforming challenges into opportunities and aspirations into achievements.

Further research on institutional doctoral completion rates is warranted, especially considering the evolving nature of doctoral programs and the diverse needs of doctoral students. Institutions are continuously adapting and refining their programs to better serve their student populations, and understanding the factors that contribute to doctoral completion rates is essential for assessing the effectiveness of these efforts. By examining completion rates at the institutional level, researchers can identify patterns, trends, and disparities that may exist across different programs and departments. This knowledge can inform targeted interventions and support initiatives aimed at improving doctoral student retention and success.

Moreover, investigating institutional doctoral completion rates can shed light on the broader landscape of doctoral education and provide valuable insights for policy development and programmatic enhancements. By examining completion rates over time and comparing them across institutions, researchers can identify best practices and areas for improvement within doctoral programs. This information can guide institutional leaders in making informed decisions regarding resource allocation, programmatic changes, and support services, ultimately leading to more effective and equitable doctoral education experiences for all students.

The implementation of exit interviews for doctoral students at the end of each semester, as well as following periods of enrollment hiatus, could prove instrumental in taking a proactive approach to retaining and supporting our human capital. These interviews would provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their academic

progress, voice any concerns or challenges they may be facing, and seek guidance or resources as needed. By fostering open communication channels and offering personalized support, institutions can better address the diverse needs of doctoral students, ultimately enhancing retention rates and promoting student success.

Furthermore, providing professional development opportunities for research supervisors in the form of academic advising training could significantly contribute to increasing dissertation completion rates per advisor. Effective academic advising plays a crucial role in guiding doctoral students through their research journey, providing mentorship, feedback, and support at critical junctures. By equipping research supervisors with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfill this role effectively, institutions can enhance the quality of support provided to doctoral candidates, thereby facilitating timely completion of their dissertations and promoting overall academic success.

In addition to focusing on traditional students, it is essential to consider the unique needs and challenges faced by adult nontraditional learners, who are often the targeted audience of doctoral programs. These students may juggle multiple responsibilities, such as work, family, and community obligations, which can impact their academic pursuits. By addressing the specific needs and concerns of adult nontraditional learners, institutions can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments that accommodate the diverse backgrounds and life circumstances of all students. This consideration not only enhances the effectiveness of doctoral programs but also promotes equity and diversity within higher education.

Chapter V Summary

This chapter serves as an interpretative exploration of the narrative data provided by doctoral students at a Hispanic Serving Institution located in deep south Texas. Within this narrative, the researcher delved into various themes and findings, synthesizing the shared experiences of students to uncover insights into the factors influencing doctoral completion. Key elements such as mentorship, the academic environment, institutional support structures, doctoral student attitudes, and intent were scrutinized to discern their roles in facilitating successful doctoral journeys. Employing a phenomenological case study approach, the researcher meticulously examined the patterns of persistence and lived experiences among doctoral students, aiming to illuminate both institutional strengths and areas ripe for improvement.

Through in-depth interviews with students who met specific criteria, the researcher documented their firsthand experiences and perspectives. This qualitative methodology allowed for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and triumphs encountered by doctoral students, providing valuable context for interpreting the findings. Participants expressed appreciation for the thoughtful questions, the establishment of rapport, and the overall conduct of the study, indicating a sense of validation and acknowledgment of their experiences. By centering the voices of doctoral students and engaging in a collaborative exploration of their narratives, this chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of the doctoral journey and lays the groundwork for meaningful institutional changes aimed at better supporting doctoral candidates.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

1. Why did you choose UTRGV?
2. Did you know any UTRGV faculty before you registered?
a. Probe: Did you know them by reputation or personal contact?
b. Any students?
c. Any graduates?
3. What type of master's degree did you have when you started the program? From which institution and department?
4. How long did it take you to complete your masters'? How would you describe your experience of the master's program?
5. Tell me about starting your doctoral program?

I would like to now discuss your work, family, and financial responsibilities.

6. Are you currently employed? (if not go to questions #8)
a. Probe: Please describe your work role.
b. What are your duties?
7. Is completion of your dissertation necessary for advancement or successful continuation in your employment?
8. If not currently employed, what kind of work would you like to be doing?
9. Is a doctorate required?

I would like to discuss your home and family responsibilities.

10. Please describe your major family responsibilities.
11. To what extent does your "significant other" accept the sacrifices of your doctorate?
a. Probe: Do they allow you time and space to concentrate on your studies? Are they interested in your studies?
12. Have your studies caused friction in your home life? If yes, can you give an example?
a. Probe: How do you deal with this when it happens?

Some people report that finances are a factor in the doctorate:

13. What was your financial situation when you began the program?

14. Do you see utility in the doctoral degree?
15. How do you view the future employment prospects for adult educators with a doctorate?

I want you now to think back to when you were doing your course work for your doctorate.

16. When course work was due for your courses, how did you organize your time?
a. Probe: did you establish a schedule that would allow you to complete it on time or did you put it off until the last minute? Or both
17. Do academic tasks take longer to complete than you expect?
18. Did you ever withdraw from the university? Why?

So that I can compare your experience with other programs I would now like to ask you some questions about your experience of the doctoral process.

19. Do you get together with other doctoral students?
a. Probe: How do you view their present situation?
b. Do you exchange ideas?
c. Do you support one another? Please describe this.
20. Do you think that this kind of group is helpful?
a. Probe: In what way?
21. Do you have a research topic?
a. Did you have a research topic when you started?
b. Still the same one?
22. How did you choose your topic?
a. Probe: Was your choice influenced by anyone?
23. What was the most difficult part of preparing your dissertation proposal?
a. Probe: How long had you been in the program when your dissertation proposal was accepted?
24. Describe a normal week of work on your dissertation?
a. Probe: How many times per week do you devote to your dissertation?
25. Some people describe the process of working on the dissertation as a lonely process or one where they feel isolated. What has your experience been?
26. Are you often distracted by other, more "interesting" things when you try to get to work on your dissertation?
a. Probe: Can you describe what happens?
b. How do you maintain interest in your topic?
27. In your opinion what is the most important quality or characteristic in a research supervisor?
a. Probe: What were the most important considerations in choosing yours?
28. How did you select your research committee?
a. Probe: How have they functioned as a committee?
29. Describe your relationship with your research supervisor?
a. Can you be more specific?

b.   Can you give me examples?

c.   Why do you think that is?

30.   Did you expect that your research supervisor would assist you to pursue funding? What happened?

a.   Was your supervisor helpful in this regard? Did you try?

31.   What were the sources of financial assistance for your doctorate?

a.   Probe: were you able to obtain a fellowship, or become a teaching assistant?

32.   In your opinion what state of the doctoral program has been the most difficult?

a.   Probe: Could this be any different?

b.   How was the course work?

c.   How was the comprehensive exam?

d.   Have you found that others have the same difficulty?

33.   During your time in the doctoral program, you have seen people that complete and those that don't – what makes these two groups different from each other?

a.   Probe: Would you have been able to predict this?

34.   Have you known anyone on the point of giving up on the doctorate?

a.   Probe: What things did they suggest were bothering them? What did they do? Do you think that was the right choice? Have you ever felt like giving up on your program? Can you describe that for me?

35.   Have you studied with people from a number of different countries? How do you view their experience of the doctoral program?

36.   Do you think there is a difference in the way men and women experience the doctoral program? Can you describe this?

37.   Have you attended one or more conferences to present papers on your research? On other topics?

a.   Probe: How often?

b.   Have you been encouraged to do this? By whom?

38.   Describe how your results will contribute to the existing body of knowledge?

a.   Probe: How often?

39.   When you embarked on your doctoral program, what type of position did you consider you would obtain upon completion?

a.   Probe: And now? Why?

40.   When did you expect to complete your dissertation at the time you began?

a.   Probe: If not, what will you do?

41.   Do you think you will complete it in time?

a.   Probe: If not, what will you do?

42.   What is it that has made you advance in the program?

a.   What has been the biggest obstacle in advancing in the program?

Those are all the questions I have for now. Do you have any questions or last comments?
(Record any questions or comments offered)

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

EMAIL GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE INSTRUMENT

To: Jacob Camacho

Hello Jacob,

Thank you for your message. As you will see from my sig line I have
retired after many rewarding years as a faculty member at UBC.

I am responding to your request to use Appendix A, from my MA Thesis
titled : Studying the All-But-Dissertation Phenomon (1995).

This appendix comprises pages 128-138 inclusive of the thesis, and
contains the pilot case study proposal, reliability and validity of
the study, case study questions and the interview schedule that I
developed to collect data for the study.

You have my permission to use this Appendix for your dissertation on
the understanding that, while you will need to alter specific areas
(such as names of institution), the structure of the Interview
schedule will remain intact. This is important as the structure of
the instrument, and the individual interview questions were
repeatedly tested before being applied.

I wish you luck with successful completing your dissertation, Jacob.
I would like to see the final product if that is possible.

Best regards,

Garnet

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Invitee,

My name is Jacob M. Camacho. I am a doctoral student at UTRGV College of Education, in the Educational Leadership doctoral program. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: Patterns of persistence of graduate students at a Hispanic serving institution. The intention is to assess the factors that influence graduate student persistence through completion.

This research is a case study where I collect data through an interview (approximately 45 minutes). Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The study is confidential; therefore, it does not require you to provide your name or any other identifying information.

If you would like to participate in the study, please read the Informed Consent letter below. I will reach out to you to confirm a date and time where we can meet via zoom to conduct the interview, should you be interested in participating.

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist doctoral programs in recruiting, supporting and retaining students. Your contribution to the study is valuable.

Thank you for your time and participation.
Sincerely,

Mr. Jacob M. Camacho

APPENDIX D

Letter of Consent

You are invited to take part in a research study about the support and retention of doctoral students at a Hispanic Serving Institution. The researcher is inviting doctoral student that have completed course work and passed competency exams or other capstone requirements to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. This study is being conducted by a researcher named Mr. Jacob M. Camacho, who is a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Ed.D. at UTRGV.

Background Information:
The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze relationships related to the factors contributing to persistence in completing a doctoral degree and the factors hindering the persistence in completing a doctoral degree at a Hispanic Serving Institution.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
• You will be asked to participate in a Zoom interview that includes 46 questions that will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Here are some sample questions:
1.   1. Please describe your major family responsibilities.

2.   Some people describe the process of working on the dissertation as a lonely process or one where they feel isolated. What has your experience been?

3.   When you embarked on your doctoral program, what type of position did you consider you would obtain upon completion?

After the interview you will have an opportunity to read and edit the transcript for accuracy and then returning it to me.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is completely voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one associated with this survey will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. Additionally, this study is   confidential, the researcher will be the only one to   know if you did nor did not participate. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.
The benefits of the study include voicing your thoughts and concerns regarding your doctoral attainment journey.

Payment:
This study is completely voluntary; there will be no reimbursement or payment for time.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept   confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports, but rather a pseudonym. Data will be kept secure by password protection and data encryption. Data will be kept for a period of at least 3   years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions now or at a later time, you may contact the researcher, Mr. Jacob M. Camacho, via Jacob.camacho01@utrgv.edu. You can ask any questions you have before you begin the survey.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. I understand and agree to the terms described above.

VITA

Jacob M. Camacho completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Texas-Pan American in 2003, earning a degree in Social Studies Composite with a minor in English. Following that, he pursued further education at the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, where he obtained a master's degree in Educational Leadership in 2008. His commitment to education continued, culminating in the completion of his doctorate in Organizational and Educational Leadership in 2024. His journey reflects a dedication to both personal growth and contributing to the field of education.

With a background as an undergraduate academic advisor in both a community college and a public research university, the researcher engaged in collaborative efforts to craft academic advisement initiatives. These programs were strategically designed to help students uncover the nuances of the hidden curriculum, enriching their educational journey beyond traditional coursework.

Researcher, Jacob M. Camacho can me reached at jacob.camacho9@gmail.com.