ANALYZING FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE FOR TIMELY COMPLETION OF RESEARCH WORK AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated factors hindering timely graduation of postgraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria. Four objectives and four null hypotheses were raised. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Four hundred postgraduate students from four federal universities were used for the study. Four rating scale questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validation by four experts. A pilot was conducted using 40 postgraduate students in Kaduna state university. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.88. Direct Delivery Technique was used for data collection. Data collected were coded into Statistical Package of Social Sciences. The package was used to run multiple regression analysis at significance level of 0.05. The result showed among others that students' factors and supervisor factors significantly affect the timely graduation of postgraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria. It was concluded that the effort of institutions to enhance timely graduation of students will continue to be a nightmare if the present condition remains unchanged. One of the recommendations postulated was that school of postgraduate studies should personally develop strategies of assessing, monitory, and controlling what is happening in various departments in the institutions regarding postgraduate programmes.

Keywords: *timely, completion, postgraduate*

INTRODUCTION

The role of universities on manpower development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. University is responsible of providing youths with skills, knowledge and understanding needed for economy development of the nation. By this, the saying that university education is an instrument of social change and economic development of any nation is undisputable fact. According to the National Policy on Education (2012), university education is expected to: (i) contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training; (ii) develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; (iii) develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments; (iv) equip students with both physical and intellectual skills which will enable them to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; (v) promote and encourage scholarship and community service; (vi) forge and cement national unity; and (vii) promote national and international understanding and interaction. In knowledge-based economies, universities are seen as instrument for change and growth of prosperity. This explained why Abiddin (2012) consider universities as a core of excellence in prioritized areas of any nation.

The timely graduation of the students is very essential on realization of any educational goals. Timely graduation is very essential to students, host universities, potential applicants and nation at large. However, completion of postgraduate students in Nigeria within the required timeframe has become illusion rather than reality. Interaction with postgraduate students in some tertiary institutions shows that they hardly graduate with the stipulated time. It is more worrisome when their residency period in the university terminates that calls for fresh admission. Substantial and growing literature from scholars such as Okurame, (2008) and Ifedili & Omiunu (2012) pointed out that high proportion of students fails to complete their research works within the time frame. The situation is frustrating that sometimes leads some students to abandon the programme entirely.

Research evidences bound on the issues surrounding timely graduation of postgraduate students in Nigeria. Scholars such as Oredein (2012) and Duze (2013) summarized the factors that contributed to this poor as follows:- (i) lack of research skills among students; (ii) students' laziness; (iii) lack of research equipment; (iii) supervisor factor; and (iv) overloading of staff. This probably explained why Abedi and Benkin (1984) described research work as one of the factor that affects timely completion of postgraduate students. Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) argued that successful achievement of goals and objectives of higher education entails more than investing in physical capital or closing the gap in capital. The scholars maintained that it also entails good management, good working relationship between institution and staff and collaboration between students & lecturers. Considering the assertions, the researchers investigated factors affecting timely graduation of postgraduate students in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem
Research work is core to all postgraduate students in Nigeria. To ensure standard in the quality of research work, master degree students work under two supervisors and two internal examiners while doctorate degree students work with three supervisors and three internal

examiners not below the rank of senior lecturer. Students are subjected to series of defenses such as synopsis, pre-data seminar, proposal defenses and internal and external defense before graduation. It is expected that master students should complete their programme in two years while PhD students to graduate in three years. Despite the time stipulation, interactions with students show that their timely graduation is always frustrated by one thing or the other. In an extensive review of reports on attrition statistics, Bourke, Holbrook, and Lovat (2004) reported that only 10–20% of postgraduate students graduated within their stipulated year of study. The study of Wamala, Oonyu, and Ocaya (2011) revealed that completion time dynamics of doctoral studies was very low completion rates. The authors stressed that, overall completion rate reported for doctoral studies was 30.1%, out of a total enrollment of 295 doctoral students admitted and registered across faculties and institutes. Recently, Agu and Omenyi (2014) opined that there is low rate of completion among postgraduate students in Nigeria. The authors added that, less than 10% of postgraduate students graduate annually. Recently, Eyiuche, Nwabugo and Uzoechina (2015) reported that the most unfortunate and painful thing studying in Nigeria is prolong period of graduation.

It is not a hinder fact that some lecturers have more than twenty students under their supervision. This excludes their lectures, supervision of undergraduate and other administrative work. Interaction with students revealed that in most course work last more than one academic session. Complains of delay in the processing of results, approval of supervisors and research topic are ramparts among postgraduate students in Nigeria. There is bottleneck and delay in the process of dissertation and thesis form department to postgraduate school for onward submission to senate for final approval. The phenomenon has led some students to stay above their residency period in the universities. This could be the reasons why some students find it difficult to fulfill their educational aspirations in Nigeria. It is common phenomenon to see postgraduate students in Nigeria abandoning their programme

after three to four years and opt for fresh admission in foreign institutions where they are sure of timely completion. The multi-faceted problems affecting timely graduation of postgraduate students prompted the researchers to carry out this study.

Significance of the Study
In view of the central position of education to growth and development of any nation, the study will be of significance to students, lecturers, supervisors, management, federal and state government and researchers.

Postgraduate students will find the study very useful as it will reveal to them factors militating their timely graduation. This will enable them develop appropriate coping strategies that will facilitate their graduation. Also, the study will provide postgraduate lecturers with appropriate strategies that will facilitate covering of the curriculum content which will go a long way to facilitate the graduation of students in good time.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to yield relevant information to postgraduate supervisors that will strengthen, sustain and expand their skills needed for timely graduation of postgraduate students in higher institutions in Nigeria. Again, the outcome of the study will reveal to management the need for structured their strategies that will enable the students to graduate in good time. This should include the monitor of classroom activities, supervision and progress report of the students.

Through the study, the federal and state government will be aware of the hardship postgraduate students in Nigeria are encountering. This will enable then to formulate a policy that will facilitate the graduation of postgraduate students in the institutions across the country. Finally, the study will shed more light to scholars on the difficulties of postgraduate students are facing in Nigeria. In addition, it will provide literature for future study that will spur up other researches in the related area.

Objectives of the Study
The study with to:
1. assess the influence of students' factor on their timely graduation in federal universities in Nigeria.

2. investigate the influence of supervisors' factor on timely graduation of postgraduate students in Federal universities in Nigeria.

3. examine the influence of department factors on timely graduation of postgraduate students in Federal universities in Nigeria.

4. establish the influence of postgraduate school on timely graduation of postgraduate students in Federal universities in Nigeria.

Hypotheses
The following hypotheses will be tested using logistic regression at significance level of 0.05.

1. Students factor has no significant influence on their timely graduation in federal universities in Nigeria.

2. Supervisors factor has no significant influence timely graduation of postgraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria.

3. Department factor has no significant influence timely graduation of postgraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria.

4. Postgraduate school factor has no significant influence on timely graduation of postgraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The researcher targeted 400 postgraduate students in four universities (Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Uthman Danfodio University Sokoto, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi and Bayero University Kano) and 20 Postgraduate coordinators in the institutions. The instrument used for this study was four rating scale structured questionnaire titled causes of timely graduations of postgraduate students

(TUGPS). The questionnaire was made up of strongly agree 4 points, agree 3 points, disagree 2 points and strongly disagree 1 point.

In order to ensure that the instrument meets the expected standard, consultations were made with experts in faculty of education who were given copies of the instrument for vetting. Their suggestions that were helpful in improving the test quality of the items were incorporated into the final copy. A pilot study was conducted using 40 students with postgraduate students in Kaduna state university. Data collected from pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.88 was obtained. Uzosike (2008) noted that the average value of correlation co-efficient must not be less than 0.50, hence the instrument was considered realizable for the study.

The Direct Delivery Technique (DDT) was employed for data collection. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents personally with collaboration of two research assistants. Data collected from the study were coded into Statistical Package of Social Sciences. The package was used to multiple regression analysis at significance level of 0.05. In the test of the null hypotheses, if calculated value is greater than table value or ($P \geq \alpha$,) the null hypothesis was rejected and on the other hand, if the calculated value of any of the null hypotheses is less than the table value or the ($P \leq \alpha$,) the null hypothesis would be retained.

RESULTS

Summary of Multiple regression result used to test the null hypotheses

Variables	Coefficient		
	B	B	t-value
Students factor	0.46	0.387	2.202*
Supervisors factor	0.52	0.381	2.541*
Department factor	0.52	0.413	2.149*
Postgraduate school	0.49	0.444	1.288*
Test results			
F- value	3.08*		
R	0.719		
R^2	0.516		
Constant	0.653		2.223*
DF	3/104		

Regression analysis used to determine the hypotheses shows a high relationship of (0.719) between independent variables and timely graduation of postgraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria. The coefficient of R^2 value of 0.516 obtained indicates that independent variables have 52% influences on timely graduation of postgraduate students in Nigeria. ANOVA further indicates the F-value of 3.08 at 0.05 level of significant indicates that students' factors, supervisor factors, departmental factors and postgraduate factors significantly affect the timely graduation of postgraduate students in Federal universities in Nigeria. The significance effect of the variables indicates that the four sets of independent variables with "t" values of 1.288* & 2.541*, p<0.05) have high influence graduation of postgraduate students in Federal universities in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The result of the analysis revealed that the independent variables students' factors, supervisor factors, departmental factors and postgraduate have negative influences on the graduation of postgraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria. From the analysis, the there is high relationship of 0.719 between the

independent variables and timely graduation of postgraduate students. The 0.516 R-square obtained indicates that the independent variables constitute 52% barrier on students' graduation. The percentage barrier obtained was found to be very high. The finding of the study was found to be similar with that of scholars such as Seagram, Gould and Pyke (1998) who opined that the prevalent problems associating with timely graduation of students are supportive relationship, students' behaviour and overloading of staff. The study of Maher, Ford and Thompson (2004) also indicated that the nature of the advising relationship; ill preparation and overloading of lecturers are some of the factors affecting the graduation of PhD students. In the same lane, the study of de Valero (2001) indentified the impact of departmental factors on timely graduation of postgraduate students in the country.

Study of Barnes and Austin (2009) observed that the role of doctoral advisors has one of the factors affecting research work of postgraduate students. The report of Completion Program (2009) revealed that the following key factors influencing PhD completion: selection, mentoring, financial support, program environment, research mode of the field, and processes and procedures. Duze (2010) stated that postgraduate students have abandoned the programme alleging frustration and victimization among other reasons from their lecturers. The author added that many post graduate students did not understand nor value research and had no knowledge of where to find information to base their research endeavours. Recently, Eyiuche, Nwabugo and Uzoechina (2015) maintained that research mentoring across institutions which is characterized by supervisor's criticisms without providing insights, setting of unrealistic deadlines and expectations, and erosion of students' self-esteem affects timely graduation.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicated that several parameters within outside the control of the students affect their timely graduation of postgraduate students in Nigeria. Some of the prevalent problems affecting the graduation of the students are outside the control of the students and even the lecturers. As a result, the researchers concluded that the effort of institutions to enhance timely graduation of students will continue to be a nightmare if the present condition of students' attitude towards research, overloading of lecturers, departmental bureaucracy and attitude of some supervisors remain unchanged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the situation, the researcher recommended that:

The school of postgraduate studies should personally develop strategies that will facilitate the graduation of students. This should include monitory and supervision of students' progress. In addition, the postgraduate schools should help to control the affairs of postgraduate students in their respective departments.

Lecturers and supervisors should make themselves accessible to students in both class work and during research. They should endeavor to encourage students to graduate as due by attending to them in good time.

The school of postgraduate studies should development strategies of motivating hardworking supervisors and PG coordinators in the institution. Generally, any lecturer supervising more than five students should be motivated. This will help to boost their morals towards the work. Finally, efforts aimed at encouraging the completion of postgraduate studies should be modified to deal with factors that hinder the success of students at various stages of their programme.

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