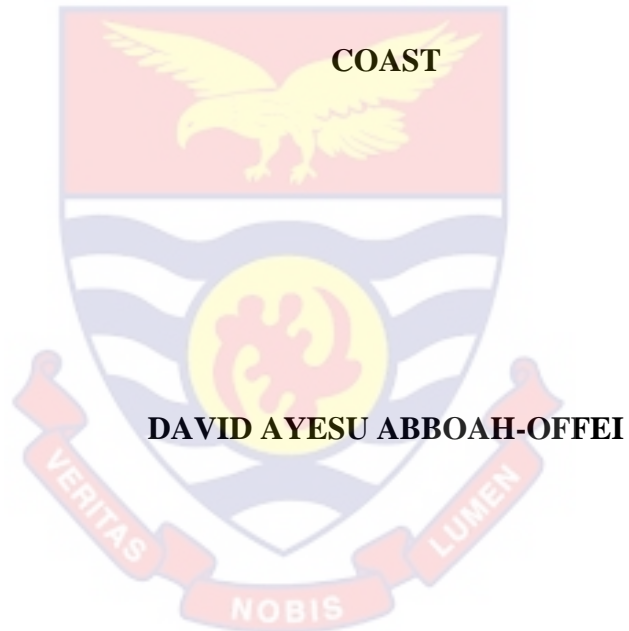


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

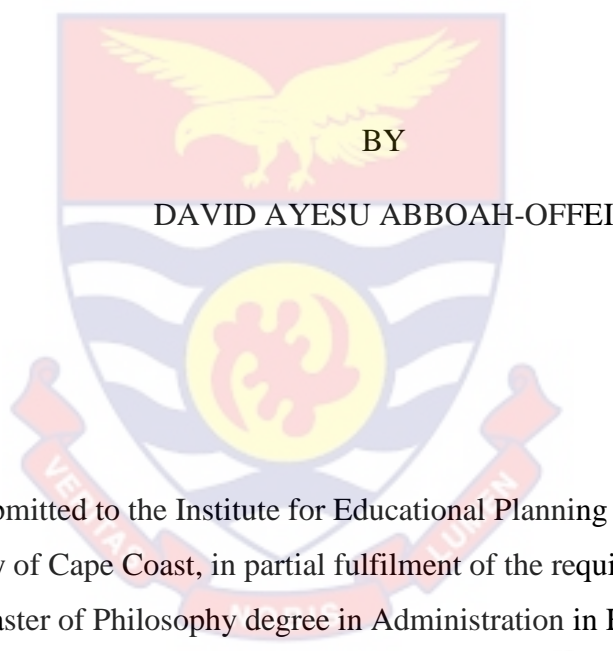
**EXPLORING FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL
COMPLETION OF MASTER'S THESES AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE**



2025

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

EXPLORING FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION
OF MASTER'S THESES AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of
University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award
of Master of Philosophy degree in Administration in Higher Education.

SEPTEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: David Ayesu Abboah-Offei

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Dr. Marie Afua Baah Bakah

Co-Supervisor's Signature: Date:.....

Name: Dr. Gloria Nyame

ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore factors that promote the successful completion of Master's theses at the University of Cape Coast. Through the phenomenology design, the study used a purposive sampling technique to select twelve (12) participants, consisting of seven (7) students, three (3) supervisors, and two (2) administrators. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants. Interview data were generated by transcribing interviews verbatim and with the help of the ATLAS.ti software. Thematic analysis was used to analyse themes. This study found that student's academic relationships with colleagues and other scholars and areas of focus for research help students to write their theses successfully. Again, easy accessibility of supervisors to students, timely and useful feedback from supervisors were also found to assist students in the successful completion of the thesis. Finally, institutional and department promoters such as Graduate School policies, measures to ensure effective supervision, provision of financial aid, provision of infrastructure, periodic seminars and work-in-progress presentations, and good relationships with departmental faculty and staff aided in the successful completion of the thesis. By recommendation, student researchers should explore cost-effective methods, materials, and technologies, and utilise resource-sharing mechanisms among departments. It was also recommended, that institutions establish a comprehensive financial framework to support student's thesis research to enable them to complete successfully.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For this thesis to get to completion, I owe it to the Almighty God and, therefore, extend my profound gratitude to him for His never-ceasing grace and mercies.

I would also like to thank Prof. Marie Afua Baah Bakah and Dr. Gloria Nyame for the professional and personal support I received from them. Your openness, amiableness, and respect towards me made me feel so comfortable to come to you at any time to discuss pertinent issues concerning my work.

My appreciation to all those who participated in the interview - the supervisors, administrators, and students. I wish to name you all in this work, but for the sake of anonymity, your names are written in my heart. It was the personal experiences you shared that lead to the success of this thesis.

For this thesis to meet the required standard and to have come out so perfectly, it also took the assistance of Editors, Transcribers, Data analysts, Printers, Binders, and Errand Runners. I say thank you. You made a great team.

I am grateful to the Abboah-Offei, Asah-Poku, and Acheampong families, which are made up of my parents, siblings, aunties, uncles, and in-laws, for their immeasurable support of all kinds.

My final appreciation is to my dear wife, Mrs. Wilhermina Nana Ama Abboah-Offei for being by my side throughout this journey. I am so indebted to you.

DEDICATION

To my beloved family

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Overview	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Question	6
Significance of the Study	6
Delimilations	7
Limitations	8
Organisation of the Study	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	10
Theoretical Framework	10
Pickle Jar Theory of Time Management to Thesis Timel Completion (Jeremy Wright, 2002)	10

General Systems Theory	13
The Experiential Learning Theory	14
Emperical Review	17
Factors Determining The Successful Completion of Postgraduate Theses	17
Personal Social Factors	17
Psychosocial Factors	20
Student Freedom Factor	22
Financial Factors	23
Student Commitment and Persistence	24
Writing Skills and Regulary Strategies	25
Relationship, Availability, and Expectations	27
Institution-Related Factors	28
Student Support Service	30
Supervisor-Related Factors	32
Supervisor Proficiency, and Aptitude	33
Supervisor Style	34
Academic, Personal, and Autonomy Support	35
Teaching/Learning Resources	36
Conceptual Framework	37
Summary of Literature Review	40
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Introduction	41
Research Design	41

Study Area	42
Population	43
Sample and Sampling Procedure	43
Data Collection Instruments	46
Data Collection Procedure	48
Data Processing and Analysis	48
Ethical Consideration	50
Thematic Framework	51
Chapter Summary	52
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
Introduction	53
Participants' Biographical Data	54
Research Question One	55
Research Question Two	68
Research Question Three	82
Discussion of Results	92
Chapter Summary	104
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Introduction	105
Summary	105
Key Findings	106
Conclusions	107

Recommendations	109
Suggestion for Further Studies	113
REFERENCES	114
APPENDIX A	126
APPENDIX B	127
APPENDIX C	128
APPENDIX D	129
APPENDIX E	131
APPENDIX F	132

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Description of Respondents	46
2 Description of Respondents by Age, Gender, and Status	54

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	An adapted version of Jeremy Wright Pickle Jar (2002)	11
2	Interrelated factors influencing successful completion of theses	39
3	Thematic framework on factors that influence successful completion of theses	52

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Theses writing has globally become an educational phenomenon and academic requirement in graduating from any educational institution that offers graduate programmes. A considerable number of factors have been attributed to students' successful completion of theses writing in various universities across the globe. Nevertheless, researching these factors at the University of Cape Coast is ideal since the University offers a wide range of graduate programmes. This chapter commences with the background to the study, which brings to the fore factors that facilitate the successful completion of the postgraduate thesis programme. This is followed by the statement of the problem, purpose, and objectives of the study, delimitation, and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with the organisation of the study.

Background to the Study

Today, obtaining a Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) degree in higher education is one of the pinnacles of academic achievements worldwide (Kumar & Kumar, 2020; Mwamwenda, 2019). Students pursuing postgraduate courses in many universities worldwide must contend with rigorous and onerous procedures that include not just coursework, internships, and tests but also the preparation and defence of a dissertation or thesis (Kumar & Seth, 2020). The reason for this is that many universities worldwide demand the completion of a thesis as a

requirement for graduation (Nouri, Larsson, & Saqr, 2019). Therefore, the master's thesis is the last official phase in most universities around the world.

Generally, students who enter into postgraduate education programmes go through two major stages. (1) course work and (2) research and thesis writing, although many other studies show more detailed stages. Many students progress effortlessly through stage one (course work); nevertheless, some students' advancement is sternly impeded at stage two (research and thesis writing) causing academic setbacks and even the abandonment of degree programmes leading to a low completion rate (Anim-Frimpong, Osei-Amankwah & Kyeremeh, 2020).

Given the situation mentioned above and its global implications, exploring the duration of postgraduate studies and the imperative to expedite students' completion of such programmes have assumed paramount significance. This matter is of profound relevance not only to postgraduate students and institutional administrators, but also to educational establishments, accrediting bodies, employers, benefactors, governmental bodies, and other stakeholders within the realm of higher education.

Several institutions in America and Europe have implemented measures to enhance the successful completion of research projects undertaken by postgraduate students (European University Institute, 2020; Gardner, 2019; Kiley, 2019; Wright & Wilson, 2020). These initiatives include the implementation of many regulations and procedures aimed at incentivising students to submit their theses within the designated timeframe.

Contrary to the claim of a significant attrition rate and low completion rate among postgraduate research students, a study conducted by the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada revealed that graduate students were completing their programmes within a reasonable timeframe, with an average duration of 2-3 years for Master's degrees. Furthermore, the study found that the rate of attrition among these students was lower than anticipated (Harrison, 2021; Smith-Norris & Hansen, 2018).

In the context of the African continent, the completion rates for MPhil degrees though uniformly low, some students are seen to have completed their courses successfully within the designated timeframe (Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh & Susuman, 2018).

The scenario in Ghana has similarities to occurrences seen in several global regions. Academics, policymakers, and other vested parties within the realm of higher education express concern about the prevailing issues of attrition, delay, and non-completion (Akpaprep, Jengre & Abaamah, 2017). Specifically, the negative consequences of this phenomenon extend to individuals, educational institutions, government agencies, and the overall prestige of the nation with its educational system. According to data obtained from the Institutional Research and Planning Office (IRPO) at the University of Ghana, Legon, the completion rates for the MPhil programme in the years 2019, 2020, and 2021 were recorded as 16 percent, 41 percent, and 36 percent respectively (IRPO, University of Ghana, 2021). Amehoe and Bortha (2013) conducted a study titled "Postgraduate throughput at the University of Ghana," in which they reported completion rates

for different courses. The completion rate for a Master in science was found to be 36 percent, whereas, for humanities Master's studies, the completion rate was 53.4 percent. The research mentioned above indicates that a certain proportion of students who have enrolled in postgraduate degrees are capable of completing their studies within the stipulated time of two years despite encountering various hurdles.

Similarly, the University of Cape Coast is not immune to the worldwide trend of a progressive rise in the completion rates of postgraduate degrees. Each academic year, the university confers postgraduate degrees to students from many fields, but in a smaller proportion relative to the rates of attrition and extended time to completion. For example, the number of students that graduated (within the two-year stipulated timeframe) in 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021, and 2021/2022 academic years are 279, 93, 336, and 549, respectively as against the number of enrolment (i.e. 1125, 1393, 1035 and 946 respectively) for the same academic years (UCC congregational brochure, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022).

Not all students were confronted with the prevailing issue of attrition and a prolonged period of graduation in higher education across the globe. However, how these students were able to surmount all the challenges that made their counterparts not complete within the stipulated time or complete at all remains a mystery. What was it that they did differently? It is important to examine these inquiries from a foundation of empirical evidence through rigorous study. It is against this notion that this study seeks to explore how these students were able to complete their postgraduate programme amid all the challenges. This study will

be helpful to postgraduate students, administrators, policymakers, donors, governments, and other stakeholders of higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Many postgraduate students have difficulty writing their theses, which causes academic setbacks and even the abandonment of degree programmes leading to a low completion rate. (Essuman, 2020; Akparep, Jengre & Abaamah, 2017). Most universities worldwide have developed a range of policies, frameworks, and interventions aimed at improving completion rates (Smith-Norris & Hansen, 2018). In the midst of all these, delay, and non-completion were on the rise.

Despite these challenges faced by postgraduate students in completing their theses, it is evident that not all students are confronted with these challenges. A few managed to complete within the stipulated time and acquire their degrees (García & García, 2021; Essuman, 2020). Nevertheless, how these students were able to overcome these challenges remains unknown. This poses a lot of questions about what these students did differently and what motivated them.

The persistent challenge of low thesis completion rates among postgraduate students, despite institutional interventions, suggests a knowledge gap regarding effective strategies employed by successful students. This gap necessitates exploratory research to understand factors that promote students to write their thesis and complete their master's programmes within the stipulated time at the University of Cape Coast.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to explore factors that promote master's students to complete their thesis writing within the stipulated time. The objectives that guided the study were specifically to explore:

1. student-related factors that promote successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time.
2. supervisor-related factors that promote successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time.
3. institution-related factors that promote successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time.

Research Questions

In line with the objectives of this study, the following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

1. what student-related factors promote the successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time?
2. what supervisor-related factors promote the successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time?
3. what institution-related factors promote the successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time?

Significance of the Study

The study will create awareness among graduate students of the factors needed for the successful completion of their master's thesis and to cope with

thesis problems. This will create an opportunity for students to enhance and hone their personal and professional skills to optimise their success rate.

This study would go a long way in assisting the policy makers (graduate school, the university, and government) to initiate policies and schemes that will improve the completion rate of thesis writing in Master's degrees not only at UCC but other institutions of higher learning in the country. Also, the study would be a source of reference or basis for other researchers intending to further study this area and beyond. Since there is an increasing intake of postgraduates, there would also be the likelihood of issues increasing, which will demand the need for research into such issues.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to the Master's students of UCC who were enrolled in the 2018/2019 academic year and completed within the 2 years duration (2021) without an extension for the Master's programme. This cohort of postgraduate students is selected because they represent the most current graduates (completing on time) thus, their contributions to the study are seen as current and applicable to present situations.

The study also covers students, supervisors, and institutional factors that assisted master's students during their research and thesis writing thereby aiding their successful completion and graduation but did not take into consideration the various subject disciplines.

The study further uses face-to-face interviews for data collection. In addition, the ATLAS.ti software was used as the tool for the data analysis.

Limitations

A significant methodological limitation of this study is the utilisation of phenomenological design, which restricts generalisability due to its inherent small sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, this limitation was addressed by explicitly stating the study's objective as in-depth exploration rather than generalisation and ensuring participant selection aligned with phenomenological research parameters.

Once again, the credibility of this study may be compromised by transcription errors, potentially distorting respondents' views, ideas, and experiences (e.g., omitted, added, or misspelled words). To address this limitation, member checking was employed, allowing respondents to review and provide feedback on transcribed data, ensuring an accurate representation of their perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, thick description methodology was utilised to verify the veracity of participants' responses.

Organisation of the Study

The study was organised into five chapters. Chapter One comprised the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, delimitation, limitations, and organisation of the study. Chapter Two dealt with an extensive review of conceptual and empirical literature related to the study. The methods of the study were clearly explained in Chapter Three. It comprised the research design, population, sample and sampling technique, instrument for data collection, data collection, and analysis. Chapter Four focused on the presentation of the results

and findings of the study, and Chapter Five highlighted the summary of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations. Suggestion for further study was also presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The study's main purpose is to explore the factors responsible for the successful completion of UCC Master's students' theses. This chapter presents the literature review of the study to build a solid theoretical, and conceptual background for the study. It focuses on the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework.

Theoretical framework

The goal of every educational institution is to intensify the level of academic standing. Of this, higher education institutions worldwide are working hard to provide an appropriate academic atmosphere that will enable students to finish their studies on time, enhance their success rates in diverse programmes, and avoid step-down situations (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2020).

This involves the use of techniques that are tailored to facilitate the integration and retention of students, as well as ensuring that their experiences are meaningful and sustainable over time. The models described in this context include the theoretical frameworks that support the understanding of student integration, retention, and completion.

Pickle Jar Theory of Time Management to Thesis Timely Completion (Jeremy Wright, 2002)

The Pickle Jar Theory was formulated by Wright (2002). The idea pertains to the economic implications of low-value, time-intensive activities. This theory is

suitable for enhancing students' time management abilities within the context of academic writing. The Pickle Jar Theory elucidated how individuals might fill their day with inconsequential tasks and obligations that lack value and consume time. The Pickle Jar Theory posits that the rocks, pebbles, sand, and water represent the many jobs and responsibilities that consume our time. The proposed theoretical framework employs a metaphorical representation of time management techniques by using a pickle jar and its contents, as visually shown in the following illustration.

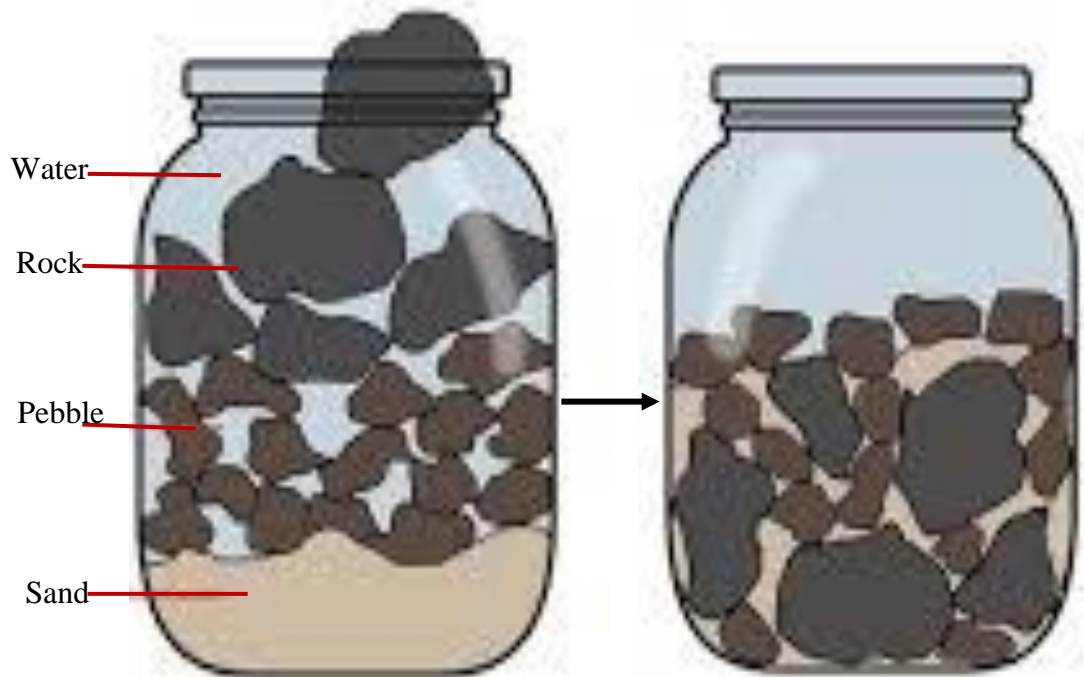


Figure 1: An Adapted Version of Jeremy Wright Pickle Jar (2002)

The items used for illustration are a jar, rocks, pebbles, sand, and water. Similar to all phenomena in existence that serve a certain function, each constituent inside the jar has a distinct reason for its being. The pickle jar may be likened to the human experience. The rocks symbolise significant work that has

substantial consequences if not promptly addressed. The pebbles, which are tiny rocks, symbolise the everyday duties that possess a degree of significance. The sand symbolises chores of lesser significance, such as phone calls, emails, and social media alerts. The sand, in this context, represents things that divert one's attention. The water symbolises the personal sphere in which individuals engage with their loved ones, fostering a nurturing and tranquil atmosphere conducive to personal development and holistic progress. If the jar is first filled with sand, there will be insufficient room for the pebbles and rocks; however, the water will effectively occupy any available gaps. If the jar is occupied with pebbles, it allows for the inclusion of sand and water, while impeding the rock. To accommodate all four components, the jar should be filled sequentially with rocks, pebbles, sand, and water. This suggests that prioritising the completion of primary duties allows for the possibility of accomplishing additional tasks and allocating time for leisure activities (Mulder, 2017).

The theory is well-suited for academic examination as it elucidates strategies for postgraduate students to effectively manage their time and avoid engaging in extraneous pursuits that may impede the successful completion of their thesis. The aforementioned notion is pertinent to the present research as it exemplifies the strategic utilisation of time to attain success. This is shown via the presentation of a jar containing various items that have not been organised, resulting in a state of disarray. Likewise, in the context of time management, a lack of organisation results in the absence of clearly defined objectives, priorities, and schedules. Therefore, it is very unlikely that any significant progress would

be attained due to the prevalence of mundane and inconsequential tasks throughout the day. When implementing the Pickle Jar Theory, the primary factors to consider are the time management abilities of students and their ability to complete tasks successfully and within the designated timeframe. The delay in completion of tasks may be attributed to students' failure to effectively manage their time, as they tend to allocate it towards non-essential activities, similar to filling their metaphorical jars with superfluous sand. The Pickle Jar Theory is very applicable to the subject at hand because it accurately depicts the lives of students. Many students exhibit time management abilities that include goal setting, planning, prioritising, and scheduling. Consequently, these skills contribute to the effective accomplishment of tasks and objectives.

General Systems Theory

The study was guided by Donald Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory, which is also known as Formal Systems Theory. Bertalanffy (1958) posits those formal organisations are entities that are founded to attain certain goals. The design of the organisation delineates how objectives are split and manifested in the organisation's subdivisions. The organisational structure is composed of divisions, departments, sections, jobs, functions, and tasks (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2020). The concept being discussed is a theoretical framework known as system theory, which involves the interpretation of observable entities and their surrounding environment from a systemic perspective (Bertalanffy, 1967). According to Parsons (1971), as cited in Morgan, (2019), the primary unit of examination is a system comprised of several interconnected components or

structures that aim to achieve a shared objective. Every constituent represents an identifiable entity with designated functions, actions, and duties that adhere to regulations and limitations. The idea posits those public and private organisations are intricate entities that may be comprehended as systems. Each organisational system consists of several supra-systems and sub-systems that play a crucial role in achieving the organisation's objectives via their linkages, interactions, and exchange of information and services.

The theory was deemed highly suitable for the present study since universities are complex organisations characterised by multiple levels of management, including faculties and departments. These entities are structured rationally, with clearly defined roles, objectives, and activities that are carried out per established rules, norms, and frameworks. As a result, the idea has been widely used in scholarly research and investigations about organisations within academic and corporate contexts. While the theory does not explicitly outline norms and regulations, it acknowledges entities as essential components in the achievement of organisational objectives.

The Experiential Learning Theory

The experiential learning theory was developed by David Kolb, who drew inspiration from many influential theorists such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget. Kolb's definition characterises this sort of learning as the "iterative process by which knowledge is generated through the conversion of experiential encounters." The acquisition of knowledge is a product of both comprehension and the active manipulation of one's experiences. The experiential theory, as

posited by Kolb, adopts a comprehensive approach to understanding the process of learning. It places significant focus on the interplay between cognition, environmental variables, and emotions, recognising their collective effect on the learning experience. The experiential learning hypothesis operates via a sequence of four distinct phases, including concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active exploration. The first two phases of the cycle include the act of comprehending an experience, whereas the latter two phases centre on the process of transforming an experience. Kolb believes that real experience provides data that serves as a foundation for contemplation. Through the process of reflection, individuals can digest knowledge and develop abstract thoughts. Subsequently, individuals use these conceptual frameworks to formulate novel hypotheses about the nature of the universe, engaging in active experimentation to validate their suppositions. The acquisition of knowledge is iteratively pursued by engaging in empirical experimentation, hence returning to the initial stages of the inquiry. However, it is important to note that the process does not always start with prior experience. In contrast, individuals are required to decide on the most suitable learning mode to adopt, taking into consideration the unique circumstances at hand.

Kolb and Kolb (2017), posit that educational methodologies that neglect to acknowledge and accommodate all stages within the learning cycle do not provide the necessary circumstances for optimal learning outcomes. Several other thinkers have also endorsed the notion that experience alone does not guarantee educational outcomes. Nevertheless, when postgraduate students' experiences are

organised in a well-structured and rigorous manner, they have the potential to significantly enhance the research output and instructional prowess of both the department and the institution as a whole. The aforementioned transformative outcomes need careful planning and implementation of research or another scholarly endeavour, while also avoiding the inclination to depend on the cliché notion that all experiences are instructive. By encouraging postgraduate students within a specific academic department to engage in a critical and comprehensive analysis of the interconnections between theoretical frameworks and instructional practises, they can acquire a comprehensive comprehension of not only the operational mechanisms but also the underlying rationales and ethical considerations involved in their empirical investigations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

It is important to avoid making assumptions about the collaborative nature of research in the context of this particular study since it may not necessarily include a partnership between the supervisor and the supervisee. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that researchers are unable to get what they lack from others. It is important to enhance undergraduate education to enhance performance in postgraduate studies since any deficiencies or misappropriations at one level might have a detrimental impact on subsequent levels of education. The proficiency with which research methodology and theory conceptualisation are taught at the undergraduate or postgraduate level might potentially impact the student's research and thesis composition phases. The theory of experiential learning plays a significant role in supporting the research writing endeavours of

postgraduate students. Additionally, it aids in the application of critical assumptions derived from this theory to enhance their research learning and overall growth. The pertinence of this concept to the present study arises from the conviction that pupils acquire knowledge via experiential means.

Empirical Review

Factors Determining The Successful Completion of Postgraduate Theses

Personal Social Factors

According to Ezelote, Eleanor, Judith, and Joy (2021), personal social characteristics have a crucial role in determining the academic achievement of postgraduate students. Postgraduate students face significant challenges in managing their time, energy, endurance, patience, and organisational abilities due to stress. Graduate students see peer mentorship and social support as facilitating an open atmosphere for the exchange of ideas and getting assistance in achieving programme requirements, as well as making progress towards the successful completion of their degree (Baker, Pifer & Flemiken, 2022). According to Alkhateeb, Abushihab, Alkhateeb and Alkhateeb (2022), some individual characteristics of students, such as self-discipline and positive self-concept, have a beneficial influence on their total academic achievement. Moreover, the aspiration of students to get a postgraduate degree serves as a driving force for them to effectively handle and adapt to stressors (Rong'uno, 2016).

According to Chaudhry, Tandon, Shinde, and Bhattacharya (2024), students who get sufficient moral support from their peer groups, as well as assistance from their families and other social networks, tend to encounter lower

levels of stress and have a higher likelihood of completing their theses within the specified timeframe. Nevertheless, research indicates that the impact of parental support and engagement is diminished in the context of postgraduate education (Ezelote et al., 2021). While the findings of research have shown that parental support does not significantly contribute to postgraduate performance, there is strong evidence indicating the influential role of spousal support. The presence of a supportive social and academic atmosphere within the faculty, as well as an effective supervision procedure, seems to have a positive impact on student resilience and their ability to complete their studies on time. Additional evidence that supports the notion of the beneficial impact of the institutional environment may be found in the work of Kahu, Picton and Nelson (2020).

The survey identified two key factors that have an impact on students' academic achievement: the academic component and the social-personality component. The concept of academic match pertains to the alignment of students' aims and ambitions with the postgraduate programme and coursework. In contrast, social-personal match refers to the interactions between students, faculty members, and peers. There exists a favourable correlation between learning style, IQ, and the amount of intrinsic motivation concerning the timely completion of tasks (Crocetti, Albarello, Meeus & Rubini, 2023).

O'Neil and dos Santos (2018) posit that factors influence the experiences of adult students concerning institutions, financial assistance, and unanticipated crises. Furthermore, the primary challenge faced by adult learners is time management, particularly the difficulties of balancing the competing obligations

of employment, education, and family responsibilities. The challenge of balancing several responsibilities leads to heightened stress levels among students, which can negatively impact their academic performance and overall well-being. Consequently, they may decide to either persist or withdraw from their academic endeavours.

In medical doctoral programmes, the students placed more emphasis on diligence and perseverance rather than intellect. The level of mentor assistance provided by supervisors and peer groups was also highly evaluated. According to Muthukrishnan, Gurnam, Hoon, Geethanjali and Chan (2022), there is a certain degree of effect exerted by student demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and marital status, on the rates of completion for thesis projects. According to Muthukrishnan et al., (2022), it is observed that male individuals and younger candidates tend to complete tasks in a comparatively shorter duration when compared to their female counterparts, as well as older and married pupils. Female postgraduate students often encounter challenges related to family duties and time constraints, which might impede their ability to complete their theses within the desired timeframe (García & García, 2021). Therefore, it is hypothesised that, on average, men students exhibit marginally greater rates of thesis completion in comparison to their female peers within the same course, assuming all other factors remain equal. The primary obligations include those of both familial and occupational domains. According to Akparep et al., (2017), African societies often lack the necessary flexibility to accommodate women with children who have rigorous schedules and obligations, hence limiting their

availability for postgraduate studies. This observation elucidates the underlying factors contributing to the modest gender disparity seen in many Ph.D. courses, where the enrolment of male students tends to marginally exceed that of their female counterparts. Moreover, the task of managing postgraduate education with familial and work-related obligations is a formidable obstacle for several postgraduate applicants across various institutions and academic programmes (Muthukrishnan et al., 2022).

Psychosocial Factors

Numerous scholarly investigations on the completion of theses have placed significant emphasis on psychosocial factors, including integration, socialisation, and assistance (e.g., Akparep et al., 2017; Essuman, 2020). According to Tinto's (1993) model of undergraduate student attrition, a certain degree of integration is necessary for students to develop a sense of commitment toward their academic pursuits. This commitment, in turn, plays a crucial role in fostering persistence among students. According to Tinto (1993), there are two distinct forms of integration: academic integration, which refers to formal aspects, and social integration, which pertains to informal aspects. In the context of postgraduate studies, academic integration encompasses active participation in professional endeavours and prospects, collaborative engagement with fellow researchers, regular interaction with peers, assimilation into the departmental community, and the exchange of academic assistance among students and faculty members (Muthukrishnan et al., 2022).

Previous studies have shown associations between several dimensions of academic integration and the successful completion and advancement of postgraduate studies (Gyamera & Asare, 2023; García & García, 2021; Amoah, 2020). Social integration, also known as informal integration, refers to the extent and nature of social interactions with peers (such as fellow postgraduate students) and other individuals within the same department outside of formal work settings. These interactions may encompass discussions on topics that are not directly related to academic work, as described by Amoah, (2020) and Shin et al., (2018). Instances of social integration include several activities, including the provision and reception of mental support from peers during times of need, the sharing of stories and experiences over holidays and weekends, as well as engaging in social endeavours such as partaking in post-work gatherings over beverages. Several studies have provided evidence supporting the correlation between social integration factors and the outcomes of completion, progress, and satisfaction (Shin et al., 2018).

One additional psychological construct that is of importance is the concept of a sense of belonging. This refers to the subjective experience of feeling linked and seeing oneself as significant and valued by others within an organisational context (O'Meara, Kuvaeva & Nyunt, 2017).

Psychosocial factors, including social integration and support, play a crucial role in facilitating the successful completion of postgraduate programmes.

Student Freedom Factor

Following previous studies on supervision, which have shown that students place a high value on autonomy (Ali, Watson & Dhingra, 2016; Levecque, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, Van der Heyden & Gisle, 2017), the extent to which postgraduate students are granted independence in the planning and implementation of their research endeavours may have implications for their levels of achievement and contentment. According to Van Rooij, Fokkens-Bruinsma, and Jansen (2021), the results of their qualitative investigation revealed that around 33% of the individuals who did not finish the questionnaire reported being compelled to pursue a route that was contrary to their preferences. In their study, Meng & Zhao (2018) found a significant correlation between the level of autonomy granted to postgraduate students in terms of planning and expressing their thoughts and their overall happiness with their postgraduate course. Hence, it is important to prioritise students' autonomy and happiness throughout the thesis writing process.

The concept of autonomy pertains to the subjective perception of volition and liberty (Devos et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The importance of autonomy support is evident in facilitating people's fulfilment of this demand. Autonomy support within the postgraduate environment may be conceptualised as the provision of space and opportunities for students to exercise their agency, fostering independent conduct, and demonstrating respect for the perspectives and ideas of master's students (Meng et al., (2018). According to Devos et al. (2017), it is believed that a supervisor who offers a significant degree of autonomy

support might be seen as contrasting with a more controlling supervisor who asserts their perspective. Previous studies have shown a significant correlation between perceived autonomy and several outcomes, including the continuation of postgraduate studies, higher levels of satisfaction, and increased research self-efficacy (Meng et al., 2018). Granting autonomy to postgraduate students in their research can have a positive impact on their motivation, satisfaction, and overall success.

Financial Factors

It has been repeatedly cited that financial support and "availability of viable and stable funding sources" is a major predictor of the successful completion of postgraduate study (Muthukrishnan et al., 2022; Amoah, 2020). In other words, the inability to secure stable funding will become a major obstacle to students especially when they are required to carry out data collection during research (Amoah, 2020). Thus, it is not surprising that students who receive scholarships have been more successful in their postgraduate studies completion (Khozaei, Naidu, Khozaei & Salleh, 2015) and have often record shorter periods to complete their theses compared to those without scholarships (Mills & Birks, 2019).

Notwithstanding, Rong'uno (2016) confirmed that adequate financial support is the "nervous system" in any academic research undertaking. Mills et al., (2019) also emphasise that research is very relevant but researchers cannot achieve anything without the necessary "carrots" which include research materials

and finance. They conclude that adequate research materials and finance will ensure the quality and relevance of research output.

Financial constraints can significantly impact research master's students' ability to complete their programmes on time, highlighting the need for adequate financial support and resources.

Student Commitment and Persistence

Lindsay (2015) conducted research that examines the affective domain within the context of PhD student writing. The study highlights the significance of recognising the intrinsic emotions experienced by students, as these emotions might influence their writing techniques. In their seminal work, Destin and Williams (2020) proposed a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors influencing graduate student persistence. This model incorporates several dimensions, including the level of student engagement within their graduate programme, the nature of their connection with their faculty advisor, the quality of the advisor-student interaction, and the characteristics of the department in which they are enrolled. According to Miller (1995), three categories of graduate students that may be differentiated depending on their level of perseverance. These categories include the “direct current,” the “alternating current,” and the “weak battery” types. According to Miller, the direct current graduate student is characterised by their ability to sustain a continuous level of exertion throughout the whole of the dissertation process, leading to expedited attainment of their academic degree. When faced with a challenge, this student promptly seeks help.

Miller (1995) Alternating current graduate students initiate the dissertation process with a high level of effort and subsequently alternate between high and low levels of activity. This kind of student doesn't need much motivation. While many students make a great start with their dissertation writing, they often run into problems while doing the research. However, students who persist and seek help when needed, such as the 'direct current' type described by Miller (1995), are more likely to overcome these challenges and complete their dissertations successfully. These students take a confident approach to their study subject and go through ups and downs while doing it. Even though these students usually don't set a deadline, they do have an approximate concept of when they should finish. This kind of student sometimes has a strong "battery" and advances towards finishing the dissertation. Student commitment and persistence are crucial factors in completing postgraduate degrees. Research has shown that students' ability to persist in the face of challenges and setbacks is a key determinant of their success in completing their degrees.

Writing Skills and Regulatory Strategies

Research has shown that students' academic writing abilities play a crucial role in their ability to complete their thesis successfully (Rauf, 2016; Zheng, Wang & Zhang, 2019). Specifically, students with strong academic writing skills can articulate their research goals, methods, and findings clearly, thereby producing a coherent and well-structured thesis. Moreover, effective writing skills facilitate the development of a well-planned writing schedule, enabling students to manage their time efficiently and make steady progress on their thesis.

In addition to possessing strong academic writing skills, students can benefit from various strategies that facilitate their development. For instance, feedback on student work is a key pedagogical instrument for teaching and learning research writing (Rauf, 2016; Zheng, Wang & Zhang, 2019). Participation in social writing and critiquing contexts, such as writing groups, writing retreats, and peer feedback writing, is also crucial for improving writing skills (Rauf, 2016; Zheng, Wang & Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, research expertise and training in research methods are closely linked to writing skills, and students who possess these skills are better equipped to create well-organised, logical, and cohesive papers (O'Neil et al., 2018). This, in turn, contributes to their ability to complete projects on time.

The role of supervisors and institutions is also vital in supporting students' development of academic writing skills. Supervisors can play a critical role in assisting students with the development of academic writing, and collaboration between supervisors and students can improve self-regulation, motivation, and writing quality (Rauf, 2016; Zheng, Wang & Zhang, 2019). By providing feedback, facilitating social writing and critiquing contexts, and fostering research expertise and collaboration, supervisors and institutions can provide students with the necessary support to achieve their academic goals.

The development of academic writing skills and regulatory strategies is essential for postgraduate students to complete their theses on time. By acknowledging the importance of these skills and providing targeted support,

supervisors and institutions can help students overcome the challenges associated with thesis writing and achieve academic success.

Relationship, Availability, and Expectations

Odularu and Akande (2024) assert that the supervisor-postgraduate-student relationship holds significant importance, as evidenced by numerous studies indicating a correlation between the quality of this relationship and both the completion of students' theses and their overall satisfaction (Shin et al., 2018; Liang, Liu & Zhao, 2021). Therefore, this thesis takes into consideration the student-supervisor connection.

One fundamental aspect of supervision pertains to the accessibility of the supervisor. This accessibility encompasses not only regular physical presence, but also frequent interactions with the postgraduate student, prompt responses to inquiries via email, and timely provision of feedback on the student's written work (Meng et al., 2018; Arthur, 2022). Multiple studies have shown that postgraduate students place significant importance on the accessibility of their supervisors. This includes aspects such as receiving prompt feedback, rapid replies to inquiries, and regular meetings (Liang et al., 2021; Arthur, 2022). Additionally, some research has shown a correlation between regular supervision and a decreased likelihood of attrition (Odularu et al., 2024; Arthur, 2022).

Research indicates that supervisors' expectations significantly influence postgraduate students' performance. Prior qualitative research reveals that supervisors expect postgraduate students to demonstrate dedication, independence, and engagement in publishing activities before submitting their

thesis (Arthur & Fenyi, 2023; Arthur, 2022). Supervisors may also expect students to publish in high-impact journals, establish international networks, participate in committees, and engage in side projects, among other expectations (Odularu et al., 2024). Studies suggest that unrealistic expectations can lead to student discontentment, delayed completion, or withdrawal.

The literature highlights the significance of a positive supervisor-postgraduate student relationship, supervisor availability, and realistic expectations in facilitating successful thesis completion at UCC.

Institution-Related Factors

The factors that impact postgraduate completion rates and time to completion include administrative aspects within institutions. These factors comprise the student selection process, student mentorship initiatives, study environment, and programme processes (Odularu et al., 2024). Arthur and Fenyi (2023) emphasise the vital role of faculties in supporting postgraduate students, stating that "faculties must move beyond the mere provision of high-quality education to foster a supportive learning environment that encourages student engagement, motivation, and ultimately, successful completion" (p. 12). Odularu et al. (2024) propose six practices to enhance postgraduate support, including: enhancing administrative mechanisms, improving advising and mentoring processes, offering financial support, establishing an academically supportive environment, providing research experiences that encourage social interaction, and offering curricular support in areas such as thesis writing skills.

According to Amoah (2020), mentor circles, which involve small groups of mentors and students, can enhance connectedness and facilitate effective social and academic integration of graduate students. This, in turn, may contribute to successful course completion. Research highlights the significance of support in navigating academic programme components, including coursework, qualifying examinations, candidature, and thesis writing (García & García, 2021; Essuman, 2020). To improve thesis completion rates, postgraduate education curricula should prioritise practical preparation for thesis writing.

According to Arthur and Fenyi (2023), institutions that provide adequate psychological and student welfare support services tend to have lower student attrition rates and higher completion rates. Gyamera and Asare (2023) note that clear institutional administrative expectations, well-defined departmental norms, and administrative duties facilitate successful thesis completion. However, departmental politics and personal disagreements among faculty members can hinder thesis progress.

Research indicates that obtaining a master's degree in social sciences and humanities often takes longer and is more expensive due to increasing resource requirements (Matsolo et al., 2018). Consequently, African universities have produced limited postgraduates in these fields over the last two decades. The scarcity of committed faculty members and administrators capable of overseeing postgraduate students exacerbate this issue.

In many departments, a lack of academic personnel hinders the successful completion of postgraduate programs. Postgraduate students often face external

obligations and express concerns about their supervisors' limited familiarity with contemporary literature and theories (Arthur, 2022). Hiring freezes have worsened the situation, creating generational and intellectual disparities among faculty members (García & García, 2021).

The significant increase in student enrollment has strained existing resources, including faculty members and infrastructure. Akparep et al. (2017) argue that introducing more postgraduate courses is insufficient to achieve the desired objectives.

Recent trends in higher education institutions include inter-university networking and cooperation. Many programs, specifically tailored for postgraduate students in social sciences, arts, and humanities, encourage collaboration and engagement with staff and students from other institutions. These initiatives offer prospects for lateral networking and joint endeavors that can enhance participating institutions.

The current study focuses on how institutional factors in universities influence master's students' ability to complete their postgraduate degrees on time.

Student Support Service

Financial support is a critical student support service for many students (Amoah, 2020). Universities provide various forms of financial assistance, such as scholarships, grants, and loans, to help students cover tuition fees and living expenses (Muthukrishnan et al., 2022; Amoah, 2020).

In addition to financial support, universities also offer academic support services to help students succeed in their studies. These services include

mentoring, structured supervision, and academic advising. According to Boakye-Yiadom (2021), mentoring and structured supervision mechanisms, such as weekly deadlines and monitoring, can help graduate candidates complete their thesis writing on time. Similarly, Wright and Wilson (2020) emphasise the importance of effective supervision in facilitating student success.

Universities also provide personal support services to help students cope with the psychological demands of postgraduate research. These services include counseling, wellness programs, and support groups. According to Boakye-Yiadom (2021), common psychological difficulties faced by postgraduate research students include waning initial excitement, feelings of isolation, and dissatisfaction. Senyamator, Domaley, Ahorsu-Walker, Abreh and Mills (2022) also highlight the importance of mental health support for postgraduate students. A holistic student assistance system, encompassing academic and personal counseling services, is essential for positively impacting students' academic progress.

Furthermore, universities provide support services to help students navigate the complexities of postgraduate research. These services include workshops on research skills, thesis writing, and time management. Universities also provide support for students with disabilities, language support for international students, and career counseling to help students transition into the workforce. Muthukrishnan et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their research

endeavors. Amoah (2020) also highlights the importance of career counseling in helping students transition into the workforce.

In conclusion, student support services are essential for helping postgraduate research students succeed in their studies. By providing financial, academic, personal, and navigational support, universities can help students overcome the challenges of postgraduate research and achieve their academic goals.

Supervisor-Related Factors

Effective research supervision is essential for the successful completion of a thesis. According to Arthur and Fenyi (2023), research is a collective endeavour requiring faculty members to guide students in producing high-quality scholarly publications. Supervisors must possess a strong research background and understanding of methodologies. They should also provide opportunities for students to develop essential proficiencies (Arthur et al., 2023).

The student-advisor relationship is vital for thesis completion. Senyamator et al. (2022) emphasise that efficient communication of educational skills by supervisors is crucial. A positive rapport between advisors and advisees is crucial for timely completion, whereas a negative relationship can hinder progress (Odularu et al., 2024). Amoah (2020) and Bazrafkan, Yousefy, Amini, and Yamani, (2019) found that students believe appropriate mentoring by supervisors is crucial for successful graduate degree completion.

A positive student-supervisor relationship, congruence in interests and expectations, and supervisor support can enhance academic achievement.

Supervisors who offer assistance, flexibility, and autonomy can foster student success (Rong'uno, 2016). Conversely, a poor advisor-advisee relationship can lead to extended completion times (Odularu et al., 2024).

Supervisor-related factors such as effective communication, positive relationships, and appropriate mentoring are critical for successful thesis completion.

Supervisor proficiency and Aptitude

Effective supervision requires that supervisors possess both knowledge and expertise in the research domain (Pizzolato & Dierickx, 2023). According to Antwi (2020), successful supervision demands research competence, enabling supervisors to critically reflect on and analyse research processes. In addition, Essuman (2020) and García (2021) suggest that students should prioritise selecting supervisors with a proven research record, including recent publications, research funding, and conference invitations.

While a supervisor's broader subject competence may be satisfactory, their lack of expertise in the specific thesis domain can hinder effective guidance (Gyamera et al., 2023). Some supervisors may lack training in the latest research methodologies, hindering their ability to effectively guide postgraduate students and provide them with the necessary skills and research competence.

Ensuring that supervisors possess the essential skills and qualities of research methodologies and domain expertise will ultimately enhance the quality of thesis guidance and improve successful thesis completion.

Supervision style

The supervisory style encompasses the level of guidance and interaction between individuals. This includes being very directive, conducting regular meetings, demonstrating accessibility, displaying interest and dedication, and providing explanations to the student. Effective communication is crucial in supervision, as it facilitates student guidance. To achieve this, supervisors should demonstrate a willingness to accept constructive feedback and engage in dialogue. They should also possess the ability to communicate transparently and truthfully (Gyamera et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2016).

Moreover, active listening and providing sincere feedback are essential communication skills for supervisors (Kumar & Seth, 2020). Regular communication between students and supervisors is vital throughout their academic pursuits (Meng et al., 2018; Arthur, 2022). A supervisory style that promotes excellent communication enables students to address specific writing concerns and receive timely guidance.

Another key aspect of the supervision style is providing regular feedback. This feedback is crucial as students rely heavily on it during their research and thesis writing (Adefulu, Farinloye & Mogaji, 2020). Supervisors are experts in postgraduate thesis writing, guiding students from basic to advanced writing competence while minimising external support (Domaley et al., 2022). Furthermore, supervisors provide both oral and written feedback on students' thesis writing, with written feedback being particularly important for addressing specific writing concerns (Domaley et al., 2022).

In addition to providing feedback, supervisors also play a crucial role in guiding students through their academic journey. They provide essential information regarding thesis preparation, reporting and review requirements, and departmental policies. Effective supervision involves providing regular guidance, support, and feedback to students. By doing so, supervisors can help students navigate the academic landscape and achieve their goals.

Academic, Personal, and Autonomy Support

The provision of academic, personal, and autonomy support is crucial in postgraduate supervision. According to basic needs theory, the fulfilment of three fundamental psychological needs competence, relatedness, and autonomy is necessary to attain autonomous motivation (Ryan et al., 2017).

Academic support is essential for postgraduate students' success. It involves providing research-related assistance, including aid in acquiring academic competencies and process-oriented abilities (Meng et al., 2018). This type of support is significantly associated with timely degree completion and satisfaction (Devos et al., 2017; Meng et al., 2018; Amoah, 2020). Specifically, academic support encompasses assistance in acquiring research methodologies and scholarly writing skills, as well as aid in cultivating process-oriented abilities, such as organisation and coordination.

In addition to academic support, personal support is also vital. It involves demonstrating concern for the postgraduate student's well-being (Meng et al., 2018). Personal support can be shown through friendliness, understanding of private circumstances, and providing reassurance during times of stress (Ali,

Watson, and Dhingra 2016; Devos et al. 2017). Research has shown that personal support is significantly correlated with postgraduate student satisfaction.

Autonomy support is another critical aspect of postgraduate supervision. It involves providing space and opportunities for students to exercise their decision-making abilities (Meng et al., 2018). Autonomy support fosters autonomous conduct and demonstrates respect for students' perspectives and ideas. Research has shown that autonomy support is positively correlated with several outcomes, including continuation of postgraduate studies, higher levels of satisfaction, and increased research self-efficacy (Meng et al., 2018).

By providing these types of support, supervisors can foster a supportive learning environment that promotes postgraduate students' success.

Teaching/Learning Resources

Teaching and learning resources play a crucial role in academic research endeavors. Libraries, in particular, serve as a vital resource for researchers, offering access to factual knowledge and various educational materials (Attakumah, 2023). These resources include printed materials, such as books and journals, as well as digital resources, like online databases and e-books.

The availability of teaching and learning materials is essential for academic success. Students who have sufficient access to these resources tend to perform better academically (Attakumah, 2023). The resources available include a variety of components aimed at enhancing research practices, such as educational materials on improved methodologies, comprehensive catalogues of research materials, well-informed researchers equipped with up-to-date knowledge, and

specialised physical facilities that provide an optimal work atmosphere conducive to research activities.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has become an essential tool for researchers, providing access to a vast array of global information and academic resources (Kwafoa, Barfi & Agyapong, 2019). The integration of communication technologies and digital libraries facilitates equitable access to academic materials, significantly enhancing research opportunities in institutions located in non-metropolitan areas.

However, the effective use of ICT in research requires national policies that address the integration of ICTs in higher education (Ankrah & Atuase, 2018). Additionally, the construction of collaborative information systems that connect all higher education institutions is necessary.

University libraries also play a critical role in providing access to research outputs, including master's and postgraduate theses (Attakumah, 2023). However, there is a need for effective systems to access these publications.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was established based on Bertalanffy's General System Theory (1967). The framework replicates a scenario in which three factors (institution-related, supervisor-related, and student-related) have an impact on the duration of completion of postgraduate studies.

The system comprises three discrete but interrelated entities, with the primary objective of facilitating the timely completion of postgraduate studies, contingent upon the efficacy and efficiency of each entity's functioning. The

successful completion of a graduate degree is influenced by several factors, including administrative policies, supervisor dedication to research supervision, efficient utilisation of teaching and learning resources, successful integration of students into their academic faculties, and students' self-commitment.

It is important to note that these factors contribute to successful completion, assuming that neither the parties involved in the research process face substantial obstacles. It is anticipated that the University of Cape Coast in Ghana would witness a similar amalgamation of factors about the institution, supervisor, and student.

The prevailing belief is that various student factors, including persistence, academic writing proficiency, financial support, and dedication to research and thesis writing, exhibit a significant correlation with supervisor factors, such as supervisor responsibilities, supervisory styles, and the working relationship between supervisors and supervisees. The variables of student and supervisor are closely interconnected with institutional factors, including the academic environment, instructional resources, and student assistance programmes. The successful completion of Master's students' thesis programmes is influenced by the interaction and aggregate impact of three key components: students, supervisors and institutional variables.

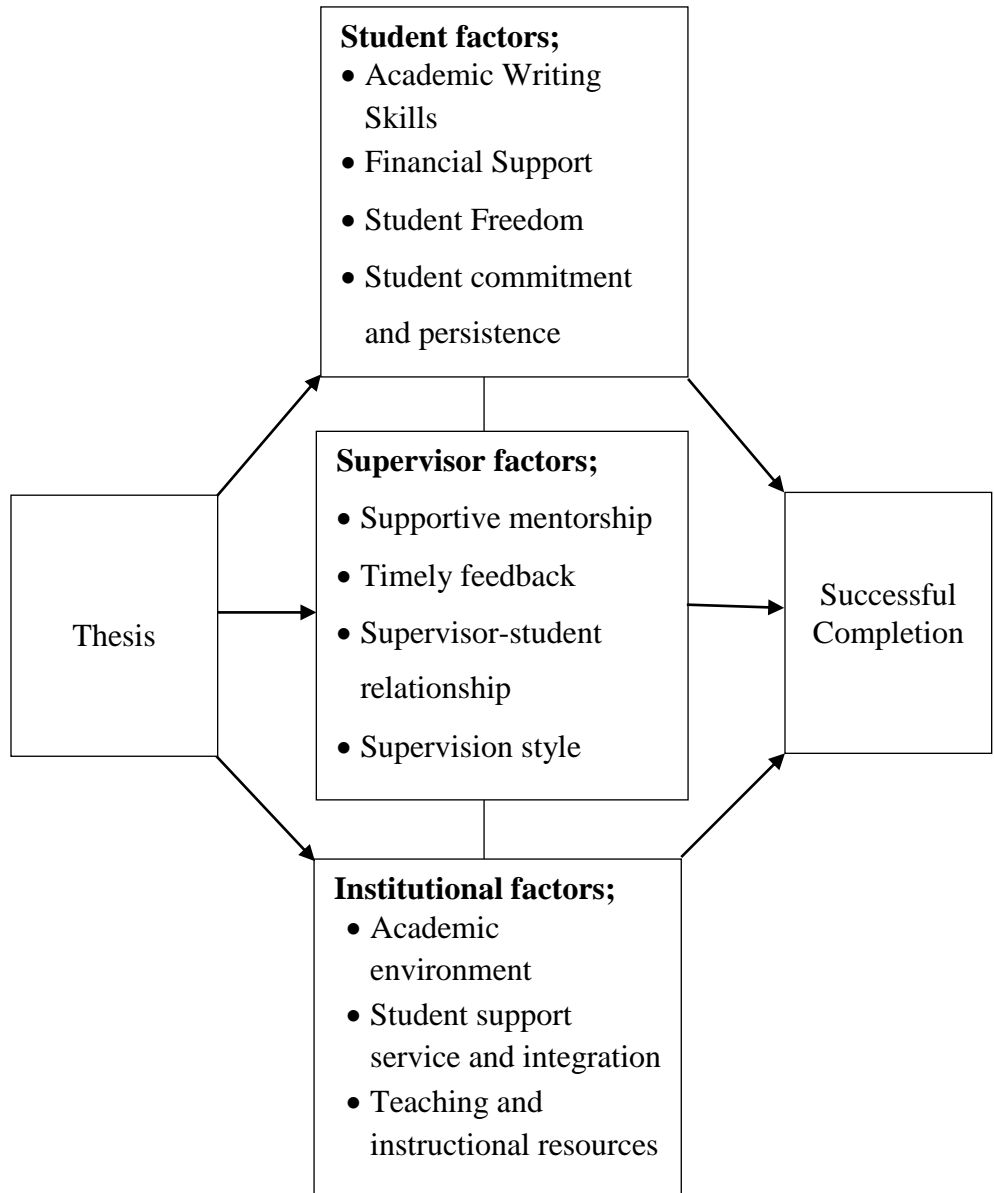


Figure 2: Interrelated factors influencing the successful completion of theses

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter reviewed the literature on the successful completion of UCC Master's students' theses, examining theoretical, conceptual, and empirical perspectives. The Pickle Jar Theory of Time Management was identified as a primary theoretical framework, highlighting the impact of task prioritisation on academic success. Additionally, General Systems Theory and Experiential Learning Theory were explored, emphasising the interconnected factors influencing student experiences and the importance of hands-on learning.

A conceptual review outlined key variables such as time management skills, motivation, institutional support, and mentorship, noting their significance in the thesis completion process. The conceptual framework provided a pictorial representation of the relationships among these variables, indicating direct and mediated connections contributing to students' success.

The review revealed substantial knowledge gaps regarding postgraduate successful completion, particularly concerning the interplay between personal, social, psychosocial, and institutional factors.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design, methods of sampling, and the procedure for collecting data. The chapter also presents an overview of the study area. Other issues discussed in the chapter are the research instruments for data collection, pre-testing of instruments; data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical issues about the research. This research aimed to explore factors responsible for the successful completion of master's theses at UCC. The details are discussed below.

Research Design

To fulfill the study's objectives, the researcher chose to employ a qualitative research approach. As explained by Kumar (2019), this approach focuses on comprehending the underlying reasons for people's behaviour, insights, attitudes, beliefs, and comprehension. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the qualitative technique allows researchers to collect open-ended data to identify themes within the gathered material. Qualitative research aims to explore and analyse the subjective viewpoints and worldviews of participants, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018). The selection of this particular research methodology was motivated by the delicate nature of the study, highlighting the need to adopt a design that cultivates trust and facilitates participants' open and honest discourse on their experiences. The significance of qualitative research is in its ability to facilitate the examination of several factors that contribute to the successful

completion of theses by UCC Master students. This is achieved by analysing the experiences, beliefs, and ideas of the respondents involved.

The research design used in this study was the phenomenological approach. It enables the suspension of common-sense views, directing attention toward reflective examination of experiential occurrences. This involves assessing the characteristics of these phenomena, exploring their consequences, and afterward sharing the findings with others for further validation or refutation. Phenomenology allows researchers to discern the fundamental nature of human experiences on a particular occurrence, as articulated by people involved in a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Study Area

The present study was conducted at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), an institution that was founded in 1962 to serve as a public and non-profit educational establishment. The institution is situated inside the Cape Coast Metropolis, which is part of the Central Region of Ghana. It has received formal accreditation and recognition from the National Accreditation Board.

There are several courses and programmes leading to degrees that UCC awards through various faculties and schools. The total population of regular students pursuing postgraduate programmes was 1,393 during the 2018/2019 academic year consisting of 897 males and 496 females (School of Graduate Studies, 2021). The study area had a needed population for the study.

I often attend graduation ceremonies at the UCC, where some students complete their programmes within the stipulated timeframe, as evidenced by the

graduation statistics. This phenomenon sparked my interest, prompting me to select UCC as the research site to explore the factors contributing to successful completion among these students, with the ultimate goal of documenting and sharing their success stories.

Population

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that in research, the population is the comprehensive assortment of phenomena or elements the researcher had an interest in and that these elements have similar characteristics. According to Asiamah, Mensah, and Oteng-Abayei (2017), a population represents a group of individuals having one or more characteristics of interest. It has to be participants who have some unique features and can provide the researcher with the needed data for the problem under study.

The population for the study comprises all the 1,393 regular postgraduate students enrolled in the 2018/2019 academic year, all the 42 supervisors (both Principal and Co-Supervisors) whose students completed on time, and the 5 administrators of the Graduate School. The population was chosen because they share relevant characteristics and experiences that can provide insights into factors promoting successful Master's thesis completion. By studying this group, the research aims to inform strategies to improve the completion rate of postgraduate education at the University of Cape Coast.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Sampling refers to the process of choosing part of the population to represent the whole population (Amedahe & Gyimah 2016). Also, Saunders,

Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) define a sample as part of the population that is selected and investigated.

To solicit and obtain in-depth knowledge about factors promoting Master's students to complete their research and thesis writing on time, the researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling. It is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2019). The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting all the participants (i.e., Students, Supervisors, and administrators), because it involved identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study employed purposive sampling to select all 21 Master's students from the University of Cape Coast (UCC) who completed their programs in 2021 within the stipulated two-year period without extensions. Their graduation and timely thesis completion offered valuable insights into factors facilitating successful completion. The names of these Master's students who completed on time were located in the 11th session of the 53rd Congregation Brochure (SGS p. 42). To enable the researcher to reach the participants, a letter was sent to SGS requesting their phone number and email address. The SGS provided the list of students who completed their thesis on time, their phone numbers, and email addresses confirming the 21 Master's students.

Also, purposive sampling was used to select 21 principal supervisors of these Master's students who completed on time, providing perspectives on their

contributions to successful thesis completion and 2 administrators (main and a deputy) from UCC's Graduate School. Their central roles provided authoritative perspectives on relevant issues, offering comprehensive insights into the research topic.

According to Crewell (2018), the sample size suitable for phenomenological study ranges between 5 and 25, and since 21 principal supervisors were many, the researcher selected 4 of them to add up to the 21 master's students.

The 21 principal supervisors were grouped under the 4 colleges running regular postgraduate programmes at UCC (i.e., College Of Education Studies (CES), College Of Health And Allied Sciences (CHAS), College Of Agriculture And Natural Sciences (CANS) and College Of Humanities And Legal Studies (CHLS). Using the lottery method, 4 principal supervisors were selected from each of the colleges giving a fair representation of the colleges in UCC.

After the 27 participants (21 students, 4 supervisors, and 2 administrators) were selected, 7 Master's students were accessible and willing to participate in interviews. The remaining Master's students were inaccessible due to various constraints, including geographical location, work commitments, lack of interest, and unavailability. Likewise, the Supervisors, one was not able to make it due to busy schedules. However, all the administrators took part.

In total, 12 participants took part in the study: 7 students, 3 supervisors, and 2 administrators. This sample size aligns with Creswell's (2018) recommendation that qualitative studies benefit from smaller, purposeful samples to ensure in-depth exploration and prevent superficiality.

Table 1: Description of Respondents

Pseudonyms	Colleges/GS	Gender	Age Group	Status
STU1	Colleges D	Male	25-39	Student
STU2	Colleges A	Male	25-39	Student
STU3	Colleges C	Male	25-39	Student
STU4	Colleges B	Male	25-39	Student
STU5	Colleges D	Male	25-39	Student
STU6	Colleges B	Female	25-39	Student
STU7	Colleges C	Male	25-39	Student
SUP1	Colleges B	Male	50-55	Supervisor
SUP2	Colleges D	Female	50-55	Supervisor
SUP3	Colleges A	Male	40-49	Supervisor
ADM1	Graduate school	Male	50-55	Administrator
ADM2	Graduate school	Female	40-49	Administrator

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Data Collection Instruments

The instrument used for the study was the semi-structured interview guide. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), an interview as a research instrument involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. The primary advantage of this approach is its capacity to adjust

effectively to various circumstances. Semi-structured interviews include the use of a comprehensive but flexible interview guide by the researcher.

To explore the factors contributing to the successful completion of University of Cape Coast (UCC) Master's students' theses, semi-structured interview guides were developed. Three sets of interview guides were crafted to align with the study's research questions, targeting students, supervisors, and institutional administrators.

The semi-structured interview guides (Appendices D, E, and F) were designed to elicit in-depth responses regarding the students', supervisors', and institutional factors influencing thesis completion. Before deployment, the interview guides underwent expert review by the researcher's supervisors to ensure suitability and reliability.

A pilot test was conducted at the University of Education, Winneba, to validate the instruments. This exercise led to significant refinements, including a reduction in the number of questions: Master's students (20 to 16), supervisors (15 to 10), and administrators (12 to 7), streamlining the interview process, and reducing participant time commitment from 150 minutes to 90 minutes. And clarification of ambiguous questions to enhance specificity and clarity.

The pilot testing and subsequent revisions ensured the interview guides' effectiveness in capturing relevant data, ultimately informing the successful completion of UCC Master's students' theses.

Data Collection Procedure

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilising self-administered face-to-face interviews as the primary data collection method. The interview protocol consisted of a series of open-ended questions, designed to elicit in-depth responses from respondents. An introductory letter obtained from the Office of the Director, Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), was used to introduce the researcher and explain the purpose of the study. This introductory letter was presented to respondents via email and in person.

Respondent selection and appointments were arranged for in-depth, face-to-face interviews, at specified times and locations. Respondents were informed that all information provided would be used solely for research purposes. Moreover, respondents' consent was solicited to record the interviews using audio recorders, which facilitated the review and analysis of the study results.

The data collection process commenced in September 2022 and spanned a period of two months. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the research phenomenon. However, the data collection process presented several challenges. Rescheduling appointments was necessary in some cases due to unforeseen circumstances, including unexpected meetings, illness, and adverse weather conditions. Nevertheless, the researcher ensured that all respondents were assured of the ethical integrity of the study.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis, according to Glesne (2022), involves transforming raw data into meaningful insights. This qualitative study employed in-depth interviews and

utilised ATLAS_{ti} software, a qualitative data analysis program, to organise, analyse, and interpret the data, yielding a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

In organising the data, the researcher imported audio files of interviews into ATLAS_{ti} software and transcribed them using the software's transcription tool, converting the recordings into written text while ensuring that words were correctly written out, formatting and style were uniform and all audio content was captured. Data was organised into documents/memos for easy navigation and management. Initial codes were assigned to data segments to identify preliminary patterns.

The analysis of data involved refining the coding scheme by assigning specific codes to relevant data segments. The codes were organised into hierarchies to identify relationships and patterns. These were segmented into meaningful themes based on the research questions. ATLAS_{ti} summary tool generated an overview, highlighting key points and trends. The researcher conducted member checking by sharing the data with participants to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

Data interpretation involves connecting codes to overarching themes and concepts through conceptual frameworks. The researcher documented insights and analytical decisions using memoing (Software). This aided the researcher in using the data visualisation technique tool in ATLAS_{ti} to facilitate the illustration of relationships and patterns, informing conclusions based on the findings.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations played a pivotal role in this study, as they define the moral boundaries of research procedures (Resnik, 2020). Social researchers have a moral and professional obligation to conduct ethical research, as findings have significant implications for society (Silverman, 2017). Consequently, researchers must develop a strong personal moral code to prevent unethical behaviour. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study.

Unethical research conduct, including plagiarism, falsification of data, and failure to secure informed consent, can mislead society and undermine the integrity of research findings (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019). To ensure the ethical integrity of this study, the researcher prioritised the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and all data were anonymised to prevent any potential harm or identification (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and acceptable procedures were followed in administering interviews. The researcher also ensured the reliability and validity of the data collection process. A pilot study was conducted to test the interview protocol, and the researcher's familiarity with the research context facilitated a deeper understanding of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interview responses were analysed using ATLAS.ti software, ensuring the rigor and transparency of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Thematic Framework

This study employed a thematic framework, a structured approach to qualitative data analysis, to identify, organise, and interpret themes and patterns within the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2020). This systematic process involved coding, categorising, and connecting themes to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research findings.

The thematic analysis yielded three interconnected themes that facilitate the successful completion of master's theses: student, supervisor, and institutional factors. These themes were derived from the research questions and comprised various factors that contribute to the successful completion of a thesis. The thematic framework is illustrated in the diagram below.

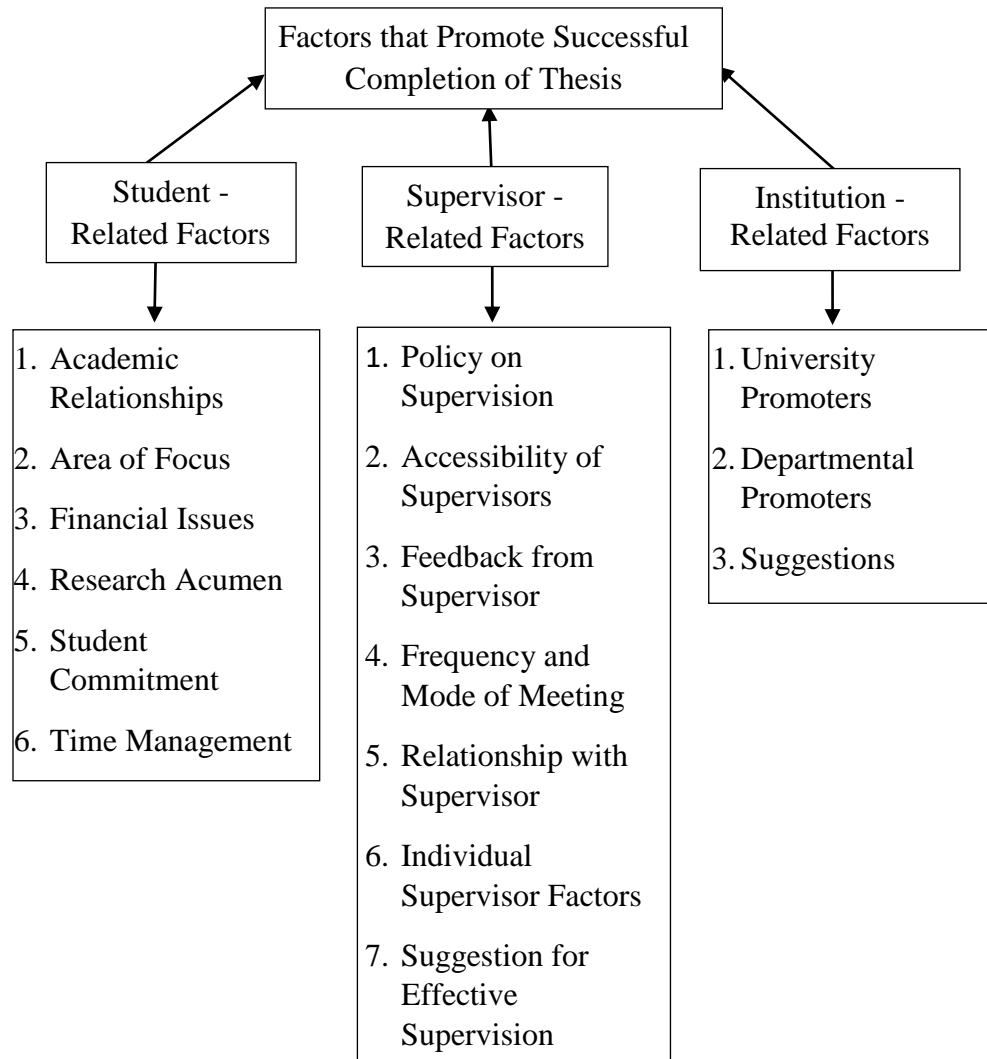


Figure 3: Thematic Framework on Factors that Influence Successful Completion of Theses.

Chapter Summary

This chapter elucidated the research methodologies used in the study. It highlighted the approach that was adopted for the study. The chapter presented the various steps that were adopted in obtaining the data for the study. It also presented the various mechanisms used in selecting the participants for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter deals with the findings and discussions of the factors that promote the successful completion of the master's thesis at the University of Cape Coast. The researcher adopted a qualitative design using the phenomenology approach, hence, using one-on-one in-depth interviews to gather data. The data collected through these interviews were then analysed using an interpretive paradigm, where the researcher aimed to view the interview responses against the context in which it was set and the subjective viewpoints of the participants. The responses were transcribed, coded, and discussed. The results and analysis are presented generally under the biodata of respondents and the research questions that guided the study. However, themes were developed under each research question to help bring out the emerging issues.

Participants' Biographical Data

This study collected interview data from 12 participants with in-depth knowledge of successful thesis completion at the University of Cape Coast (UCC). The participants consisted of 7 master's students who completed their programs within the stipulated timeframe in 2021, 2 administrators from the Graduate School, and 3 thesis supervisors. The group comprised 3 females and 9 males, with ages ranging from 25 to 55. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the identities of the respondents were kept undisclosed. Instead, pseudonyms were used to identify information attributed to them during the interviews.

Table 2: Description of Respondents by Age, Gender, and Status

Name	Variable (Age)	Frequency	Percent
STD1-STD7,	25-39 years	7	58.3
ADM2, SUP3	40-49 years	2	16.7
ADM1, SUP1, SUP2	50-55	3	25.0
Total		12	100
Name	Variable (Gender)	Frequency	Percent
STU1-STU5, STU7, ADM1, SUP1, SUP3	Male	9	75.0
STU6, ADM2, SUP2	Female	3	25.0
Total		12	100.0
Name	Variable (Status)	Frequency	Percent
STU1-STU7	Student	7	58.3
ADM1, ADM2	SGS Administrator	2	16.7
SUP1-SUP3	Supervisor	3	25.0
Total		12	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Research Question One

What Student-Related Factors Promote the Successful Completion of Master's Theses within the Stipulated Time?

Research question one sought to determine the student-related factors that promote the successful completion of Master's theses within the stipulated time. From the analysis of the data, the themes that made up these student-related factors are academic relationships, area of focus, financial standing, research acumen, student commitment, and time management.

Academic Relationships

This theme is concerned with the relationships that students form with faculty, colleagues, and other students and how these relationships create an avenue for the successful completion of a thesis. Participants described academic relationships in their instances in the quotes below

"When I got to UCC, I quickly made friends with people across the divide. I had coursemates who could read through whatever I have drafted before I could even forward it to my supervisor." (STU1)

"The relationship that the student has with his or her immediate colleagues is another criterion that helps in the successful completion of the thesis." (STU2)

Student participants shed more light on how academic relationships motivated them. This is what they had to say:

"...colleagues within the School of Agriculture who were also doing Agriculture were of support when we met at the Graduate

Study room. Anytime we needed information for something, some guys were ready to help. They were ready to support me.” (STU3)

“My colleagues in the programme were equally highly motivated people. We were all punctual and checking up on each other on the stages of our work so I will talk about the fact that my colleagues were equally motivated so they influenced me as I also equally influenced them.” (STU4)

Participants further stated that receiving support from students and lecturers is vital through the building of relationships. The quotes below reflect this assertion.

“... colleague students played a part. When I'm unsure, I seek feedback from them, share my concerns, and consider their input, which ultimately influences my work. Aside from seeking feedback, I also approach experienced lecturers with specific challenges I'm facing. I ask questions, and they respond with clarifying questions of their own. Their insightful questions help me identify areas to focus on and find solutions.” (STU5)

“Getting support is a key factor to a student completing on schedule. ...they can add on and they are like this one, take it out, get here you will get this material and read on.” (STU7)

“... if your friends are supportive, they can also help you in finishing early. You can give your write-ups to them to vet for you.” (ADM2)

A participant who was a student also threw light on the fact that these relationships not only help in the actual thesis writing but also help students cope with the stress of academics by giving companionship. This is what the student had to say:

“... anytime I was feeling bored, I could go to them and we would watch movies for some minutes. That companionship was there. Apart from academic work, we could discuss other things such as family, business, and among other things. This made me relaxed.”

(STU1)

A supervisor stated that cordial relationships among students and supervisors are essential. This is what was said

“Yes, cordial relationship with supervisor is also key.” (SUP3).

Data from participants showed that the relationships they formed with other colleagues, who had already gone through the programme or same-year cohort mates, faculty, and other scholars, played either a direct or indirect role in their successful completion of the thesis. This shows how positive or negative impact relationships can be when writing a thesis.

Area of Focus

The area of focus covers the programme of study and ultimately the area of research. The area of focus has an impact on students finishing their thesis on time as a reasonable research problem with minimum expected challenges will be intriguing enough for students to finish successfully. This is what participants had to say about this theme:

“...the area was interesting and fascinating to me so I committed time and resources to it. I remained focused on the phenomenon of interest which was fascinating and motivating.” (STU1)

“I develop an interest in the area of breeding from the undergraduate level so the interest is also one factor that can affect your early completion.” (STU3)

Participants shared the view that the area of focus should not just be interesting but should also be researchable. This is what participants said

“Students have to know what they want to research about. You have to read to see that yes, this area is indeed researchable. The first thing students have to know is the ability to couch a good topic. If you get a good topic then you are making progress.” (ADM1)

“Some topics are not researchable or as a novice researcher, you don’t have to go for a topic that is too difficult.” (STU6)

Participants suggested that to get such an interesting area of focus to enable successful completion, students must read extensively. The quotes below reflect this assertion.

“... knowing what you are really writing on, understanding of your topic and then knowing where to find your facts and figures from.” (STU7)

“Thesis requires the student to put in much effort that is reading and research. The master’s and Ph.D. work is about research. You

have to read around broadly to enrich whatever your ideas are.”

(ADM1)

“I give them two books on research. One is on general research and another on research proposal and I ask them to read. ... they apply themselves to reading and I make sure that for each thesis you want to write you should at least have three samples that are similar to what you want to do, so that you don't go and reinvent the wheel.” (SUP1)

A supervisor mentioned the adverse effect of not having an interesting area of focus and recommended that students should always come up with their area of interest to stay motivated to finish on time. This is what the supervisor had to say:

“A lot of times students come up with topics that are not coming from them. They are given the topics, so get to a point and they are not attached to the topic because they are not those who engineered them. Students should make it a priority to come up with topics that they have an interest in. This is the first step in fast-tracking your effort in completing within the stipulated time.”

(SUP2)

From the participants' assertion it has been noted that as students indulge in interesting research problems which is stimulating and reasonably challenging to satisfy their curiosity, they will be motivated enough to finish early. This

suggests that a research area that is esoteric and abstruse will lead to unnecessary delays.

Good Financial Standing

Graduate education necessitates ample financial resources. In any research activity including thesis, there is a financial component that can ensure its successful completion. First of all, participants elicited how graduate education required financial planning. The following quotes reflect participants' take on financial planning.

"... financial issues can influence when you will complete your thesis. I had saved a little for my thesis, so there were no issues about finances. Being financially sound would help in completing your thesis." (STU3)

"I saved for one year and the second year whilst I was saving I enrolled in the programme." (STU4)

"Students should consider financial issues before jumping into the programme. You do not start midstream you start writing to us about financial issues." (ADM1)

Participants emphasised that graduate education requires significant financial investment due to various factors, highlighting the necessity of substantial financial resources to support academic pursuits.

"... if one does not have financial resources, he or she should not enroll in a master's programme. Graduate school is all about money. It is not about the fees but the finances you will need to

survive on campus.” (ADM1)

“Some of the research problems require a lot of movements by students. If students have the financial resources available, it also helps in a way.” (ADM2)

“Thesis research frequently involves travel for data collection, placing significant financial demands on researchers. Family support can provide crucial assistance.” (STU6)

“Students should consider grants, sponsorships, and external funding to overcome financial barriers in thesis research”. (SUP2)

Participants also demonstrated how the grants and scholarships received from the university aided in the successful completion of the thesis. This is what participants mostly students had to say:

“what helped me complete on time is the scholarship money I got from Graduate School. It helped me because if I could remember, I went to a hospital (name withheld) not less than twenty times even before I started the data collection.” (STU2)

“... we recently organised an award ceremony even amid hardships and also instituted a research fund. This award will be given to students to encourage them to write a good thesis and to finish on time.” (ADM1)

Participants specified that graduate education requires a lot of financial resources and not being able to meet that can cause delays in the completion. According to participants, finances can be a factor in the successful completion of

a thesis. It was also noted that graduate education required financial planning before admission to enable successful completion. Also, participants asserted that carrying out a research activity demands a financial aspect to fuel movement. Participants who received grants and scholarships spoke of the input of such aids in their successful completion.

Research Acumen of Students

Research acumen relates to students' previous research experience, skills, and knowledge. If students have this in abundance it might accelerate the successful completion of a thesis. This theme is leased from the following quotes of participants:

"Apart from the courses we were taking during our undergraduate and the advanced research methods during the postgraduate, we were doing something practical. We go to the field, collect data, analyse, and present the findings. These basic things were polishing us along the line. I had knowledge which I would say was okay for me to write my thesis successfully." (STU2)

"If a student knows more about research, they will be able to organise their work and use their time appropriately." (ADM2)

Participants also indicated that some entities in the university such as departments and GRASAG play a support role in equipping students with research knowledge and skills. These are the voices of participants about such support.

“... your department too will have to support you in a way. Your department can organise workshops about how to write the various chapters of the theses.” (STU6)

“When you go to the student front, GRASAG as a student institution also played a very vital role because there were several seminars the student leadership organised towards research and even data analysis.” (STU1)

Most participants attended seminars, programmes, and workshops organised by their department and student institutions like Graduate Student Association and this boosted their research acumen thereby facilitating their successful completion. These programmes cover most parts of the thesis and how to write them effectively. Also, these programmes cover essential statistical tools for data analysis which come in handy for thesis writing. Again, courses run for students to improve their knowledge of advanced research methods needed for thesis writing were a factor for students’ successful completion.

Student Commitment

This theme is about students’ motivation to complete aptly even when faced with difficulties. It also looks at students’ discipline and dedication to the thesis writing. The following quotes from participants reflect this theme

“I will say motivation is a factor because if you are a student and you are not motivated to do the work, laziness sometimes sets in.” (ADM2)

“... if you look at the students themselves you notice that they were students who were very self-motivated (and that is why they completed early)” (SUP1) Emphasis added

“...the composition of the student is a great factor coupled with other factors that influence their completion of the thesis positively or negatively. These compositions include; Interest in the thesis work. This arises when the student has an understanding of what the thesis is all about. With such an understanding, they can spend quality time on the thesis and forego other equally important things. This interest serves as a catalyst or motivation for the student to complete within the time allotted. You know, motivation itself is an essential factor that works magic when a student has a lot of it.” (SUP3)

“... the bottom line is the preparedness of the student. Yes, supervision is another level but you the student should show that you are ready to do the work.” (ADM1)

From the data, another aspect of student commitment is focus on the phenomenon of interest. This is where student stay focused on thesis process. Following are student voices on that:

“... I was focused on the phenomenon of interest, that is, what I was going to research about.” (STU1)

“I did not allow anything personally to be a setback to me while I was taking the programme.” (STU4)

“You might have other things doing but you have to allocate more time to writing your thesis.” (STU6)

“... student commitment to their studies plays a role. As a student you

must be committed to do what you are supposed to do here, that is to study.” (ADM2)

Another aspect that participants highlighted to be essential in student commitment is hard work, discipline, consistency, and dedication. These quotes from participants encompass these features

“It was just hard work, dedication, and discipline. These were the things that helped and I was also ready to read.” (STU3)

“... I was working hard every day, it is not partial work, it was a full-time job, I was involved and very hard working.” (STU4)

“... you have to be disciplined and time conscious in writing the thesis. There shouldn't be a day that you don't write an aspect of your thesis. You should always be committed to it.” (STU6)

“I can also say showing commitment is another factor. Is commitment that will see you through the thesis work. No matter how easy or difficult the thesis is to a student, being committed to your work will yield results.” (SUP3)

Participants were of the view that being committed is key to early completion and preventing delays as seen in how consistent, zealous, and passionate one is in the thesis work. The following statements by participants confirm their opinions

“I will say it's consistency and being committed to the work. These are very key to my completion on time. Reading and writing, reading and writing was all I was doing, having time for the work and

foregoing some pleasures.” (STU5)

“... if you are not committed to what you do, it’s going to take you longer to finish your programme.” (SUP2)

Furthermore, being able to accept corrections goes a long way in thesis completion and it reflects student commitment. Participants said this

“I was not shy to accept those corrections that my colleagues made. That was one thing that helped me.” (STU1)

“... any correction that you have been told to do, do it. If there is any point about the correction you don’t understand, you have to fall on your supervisor for explanation.” (STU6)

In a suggestion to students to stay committed, a participant said this about being goal-oriented.

“Students should also be goal-oriented. For what purpose are they embarking on the thesis?” (SUP2)

According to participants, thesis writing demands a lot of hard work, dedication, consistency, and discipline to complete it successfully. Participants also suggested focusing on the phenomenon of interest and being motivated in the process as some of the features to ensure prompt completion. Moreover, participants hinted that being goal-oriented and capable of accepting corrections are also indicators that might result in the opportune completion of the thesis.

Time Management

This theme talks about how planning and time management come into play in student successful completion. In every task, efficient use of time is one of

the factors that will ensure its apt completion and the same can be said for the thesis as indicated by the study's participants. From the data gathered from participants' interviews, participants were made to prepare a timetable/schedule for their thesis and this helped their prompt completion. The subsequent quotes relish this plan.

"I have a timetable for writing my thesis and I was disciplined to the scheduled time." (STU5)

"During our proposal writing you had to design a plan of when you are starting and when you are ending." (STU7)

"... we develop time frames or lines for each of the areas we want to cover. And then we try as much as possible to meet those time frames," (SUP1)

Another participant stipulated that being able to meet deadlines set by both parties that is the student and supervisor also had a positive impact on the successful completion. This is what was said.

"... the ability of the student to also meet deadlines because there are times you are asked to submit this at this time so when you can do that then it means you can move to another level." (STU7)

A participant postulated that there was ample time given for him or her to finish the thesis as a study leave was granted and this also ensured the successful completion of the thesis. The voice of the participant is as follows.

“I had ample time juggling between my studies and work because I had study leave. This allowed me all the time I needed to work on the research.” (STU1)

From the interview data participants of this study indicated how time management can also influence the prompt completion of the thesis. Participants postulated that the ability to meet deadlines, stick to a timetable/schedule, and have ample time will contribute to successful completion.

Research Question Two

What Supervisor-Related Factors Promote the Successful Completion of Master’s Theses within the Stipulated Time?

In answering Research Question Two which sought to explore the supervisor-related factors that contribute to successful completion of Master’s theses within the stipulated time, seven themes emerged from the responses of the participants. They were knowledge of thesis supervision, accessibility of supervisors, prompt feedback from supervisor, frequency and mode of meeting, relationship with supervisor, individual supervisor factors, and suggestion for supervisor-related factors. Their responses indicated varying sentiments about these student-related factors.

Knowledge of Thesis Supervision

To ensure effective supervision of the thesis, there should be policies guiding and binding parties involved in the thesis writing. These policies will also bring a level ground when inconsistencies and confusion arise in the process of thesis supervision. From a participant’s voice, this theme gives a bit of insight

into the policies surrounding thesis supervision. Participant's voice along this theme is established as follows.

“Graduate school collaborates with departments and faculties to run postgraduate programmes. So, when it comes to the appointment of supervisors. Departments would nominate and we would appoint the supervisors. We appoint, and they nominate based on some criteria. Whether this person has what it takes to supervise the work, looking at the qualification of the person and rank. If it is an M.Phil or Ph.D, then it requires a certain minimum rank so like in your case being an M.Phil student who is writing a thesis, you should be supervised by someone who is a Senior Lecturer and above. That person must not necessarily have a Ph.D. In the case of a Ph.D student, the supervisor ought to be a Senior Lecturer and must have a Ph.D. All of this comes into play in nominating supervisors. Even now at the master's level, we are saying that only one supervisor should be supervising students.”
(ADMI)

The participant continues to establish the way the Administration is going to disseminate to all stakeholders the contemporary policy on supervision. The participant asserted this.

“The whole of next week we are going to engage our stakeholders that are the Deans, Vice Deans, and Heads of Department to have a seminar and these are some of the issues we will be deliberating

on. Also, we would talk about admission, supervision, and thesis examination as to who qualifies to do that. Even after viva and all that, there are still delays.” (ADM1)

Through the same participant postulations, there have been some counter-complaints against the contemporary policy on supervision. This is what was revealed through the participant’s quote.

“Now another complaint is coming up that the previous dual supervision was okay. It is funny how they were the same people who complained that they wanted their hands to be free.” (ADM1)

Participant quotes making up this theme span from requirements for masters and PhD thesis supervision to current policy on supervision. Again, it was seen that there was a complaint about the current supervision policy which needs to be resolved.

Accessibility of Supervisors

This theme expounds on how readily supervisors were accessible to offer help and guidance in the thesis writing process. This theme is grounded in the following data from participants’ interview

“... he presented himself as if we were colleagues. I could call him anytime, and he was always there to respond to my calls. ... he availed himself anytime we were to meet.” (STU1)

“... on the spot, she will just give you what you want, she will correct you and then you go back sit down and then do the needful and then quickly come back to submit.” (STU7)

Participants continue to express the conscious effort made by their supervisor to avail themselves even during a pool of responsibilities. This is what the participants said.

“... he was burdened with a lot of responsibilities. Though he had extra responsibilities, he factored the supervision into his work knowing that it was an integral part of his responsibility at the university and he did it so well.” (STU1)

Participants in their postulation expressed how accessible a supervisor is in contributing to the successful completion of the thesis. This is being available for meetings even amid numerous responsibilities to how easily to get in contact with a supervisor.

Prompt Feedback from the Supervisor

Prompt feedback from supervisors informs students about the direction and needs corrections to be made for progression in the thesis writing journey. This theme relates to participants' assertion about prompt feedback received from supervisors concerning their inputs. The quotes from participants on this theme are enlisted as follows

“I will promptly review your drafts, provide feedback, and collaborate with you to refine the content, ensuring timely and high-quality output” (SUP1)

“Timely feedback from the supervisor is another factor that aids early completion of the thesis work.” (SUP3)

Participants added that the feedback should be helpful to give the proper recommendations and directions for the thesis. They had to say this about helpful feedback

“... giving the right directions to students will make them complete successfully either early or on time.” (ADM2)

“...their feedbacks were timely, helpful, and encouraging.” (STU4)

A participant suggested to supervisors that they should evaluate aspects of the thesis sent to them by students on time as it aids in the successful completion of the thesis. This is the voice

“Reviewers should provide timely feedback on submitted works to enable prompt revisions.” (SUP2)

The theme covers the timely frequency and helpfulness of supervisors' feedback and how it contributes to the successful completion of thesis writing. In that, not every feedback can lead to successful completion but prompt and useful feedback will be advantageous in the successful completion of the thesis.

Frequency and Mode of Meeting

Participants enumerated the frequency and also the mode of meeting with their supervisors and saw this to be another contributing factor to their successful completion. Some participants said the usual mode of meeting was face-to-face. This is the voice of participants about such meetings.

“Mostly we met face-to-face and also through phone calls.” (STU3)

“The mode sometimes was face-to-face but other times the work is sent through email and discussion made over the phone.” (STU4)

“With the mode of meeting, the first of it was face-to-face.” (STU5)

“At times I go to campus to meet him then at other times we were able to have Zoom meeting.” (STU6)

“It was mostly face-to-face, we did the face-to-face meeting but when I’m writing and some of the corrections, I’m not able to get it, we do the correction on the phone but most of our meetings were face-to-face.” (STU7)

“... when we have the physical meeting...” (SUP1)

“we can meet face-to-face and if the student is on the field and encounters a challenge, discussions are done over the phone. Sometimes through email...” (SUP2)

The face-to-face meeting was also supplemented with other means of meeting and this is what participants had to say about the other means through which the meetings were done.

“The face-to-face meeting was limited because we were always discussing it either through the mail, WhatsApp, or on the phone.” (STU2)

“At times I go to campus to meet him then at other times we were able to have Zoom meeting.” (STU6)

“The use of technology such as email, WhatsApp, zoom, and phone calls among others facilitated prompt feedback.” (SUP3)

The frequency of the meetings varied across students and supervisors but the frequency did not exceed monthly meetings. These are the quotes to reflect the number of times meetings were done

“...we were meeting like three times within a month and there were times we had to schedule additional times.” (STU1)

“With the meeting, it was quite a few numbers, in all we met about ten times for the year.” (STU2)

“... within a month, we were able to meet about five times.” (STU4)

“At least I met him once every week...” (STU3)

“My supervisor scheduled with me, that for every week basically on Fridays, I will have to submit my thesis work for assessment.” (STU6)

Participants enlisted the main mode of the meeting as face-to-face and also went to list the supplement means for the meeting which is via emails and social network platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom. Participants again specified the frequency of the meeting. These meetings allowed for issues about the thesis to be discussed at length and also gave avenues for further mentoring and direction.

Relationship with Supervisor

This theme highlighted the type of relationship that existed between students who completed the thesis successfully and their supervisor. Most participants described their relationships with their supervisors as good and cordial. Participants' responses are found in the voices ensuing.

“I had a good relationship with him.” (STU2)

“Then also you have to develop a good relationship with your supervisor. The relationship between the student and supervisor must be cordial.” (STU3)

“The relationship of supervisor and student is a key factor. I got a supervisor who always asked me to come to him anytime am faced with any difficulty regarding the thesis. His openness to me enabled me to ask a lot of questions that brought clarity to my confusion.” (STU5)

“In fact. I had a cordial relationship with my supervisor... My supervisor is even able to send me files this tells you that there was a good rapport between me and my supervisor.” (STU6)

“Is just the lecturer-student relationship. It was more of the friendly type.” (STU7)

“I strongly believe a cordial relationship between a supervisor and supervisee will promote an early completion of the thesis.” (SUP1)

“Another thing that helped my student to complete on time was a good relationship that was built. I welcomed him into my office any time he arrived and answered his calls when appropriate. When I’m in a meeting and can’t answer his call, I send a text message to that effect. I made him feel at ease to come up with anything that was a bother to him. Calling at times to find out how he is doing and how the thesis is also going. This I believe, broke any barrier.” (SUP3)

On how to achieve this kind of good and cordial relationship, a participant uttered that, students have to make an effort to bring about this friendship. The participant vocalised this by saying this.

“Prove to him that what you are doing is important. This will bring that friendliness. When you go to the supervisor, your posture and response to his questions will contribute to your relationship. You as a student will have to help the supervisor to have a good association with you.” (STU3)

A participant also elucidated the reason why he or she prefers a professional relationship with students. The participant remarked this

“...I would rather prefer a professional relationship because, to some level, cordial relationship is a double-edged sword. Sometimes, a student might take your cordiality for granted or see your leniency as a weakness. I believe that whatever the relationship is you should be professional.” (SUP2)

This could mean that previous students have taken advantage of the cordial relationship established between the participant and such students.

Most participants elicited that they had a good relationship with their supervisors. This kind of relationship will allow students to go to supervisors without any fear of intimidation to seek all sorts of knowledge and direction needed for the successful completion of the thesis.

Individual Supervisor Factors

This theme connotes participants' views on the specific factors of supervisor factors that contribute to students' successful completion of the thesis. First of all, participants especially student participants specified that supervisors gave them autonomy to choose aspects and also own the work with little guidance. The views on this are listed below.

"I did enjoy student autonomy one hundred percent and if there is anything more than one hundred percent, I did enjoy that. Because from conception to the design to the execution, the autonomy was always granted to me." (STU1)

"Of course, every aspect of the work I did myself. Everything about the work I did myself. My supervisor did not force me to do anything. He did not force me about which statistical tool I should use or the design. Everything I did myself. For the freedom it was there, hundred percent." (STU3)

I had that level of autonomy even though they played a major role in the work." (STU4)

"... students were told that the work is yours, not your supervisor's. I enjoyed autonomy in carrying out my work." (STU5)

Some participants classified the total quality of supervision received from their supervisor to be good and it can only be stipulated that this contributed positively to thesis writing. The following quotes throw light on the good description of the quality of supervision received

"I would not give excellent but it was very good" (STU3)

“I will say that it was great, I wouldn’t say it was 100 percent but I think it was good work done because she taught me that even though she had gone through the work, I should equally give it to another person to also read through and submit the final work to her.” (STU7)

Furthermore, a participant indicated that supervisors provided material and resource persons to facilitate the thesis writing and supervision. This is what some participants postulated about that.

“...in terms of resources as in literature that you need, he will get it for you. If you are finding it default getting it, he will get you something so you will have no excuse. Aside from that, he assigned me to two seniors from the earlier cohorts to guide me through the process. He made sure anything I needed was provided including making phone calls on my behalf.” (STU2)

Participants were also of the view that supervisors’ adequate knowledge in the area of research and the processes of research were of great advantage to their completion. Their opinions on this are as follows.

“With knowledge, he is fantastic, especially with methodology.” (STU2)

“I will say that he is very competent.” (STU4)

“To be a good and effective guide to students, you must show mastery over the thesis knowing what goes into every component and more especially knowing the requirements of the university.” (SUP3)

Another important factor based on individual supervisors is their willingness to accept the role of supervision based on participants' data. This is supervisors' willingness to accept the task of supervising the student to undertake research in a particular field of study. Subsequent quotes of participants depict supervisor readiness

"... supervisor should be ready to supervise you. If the supervisor is ready and accepts the role from the onset, it is a plus." (STU3)

"Mostly a student should be given a supervisor who is interested in your topic or the area of interest of the student..." (ADM2)

Again, participants' responses showed that supervisors' requests for the development of a work plan did contribute to successful completion. Participants assertions on this factor are envisioned in the quotes below

"First and foremost, he (Supervisor) tasked me to develop a work plan. He (Supervisor) made inputs into this work plan and the two of us discussed that work plan." (STU1)

"What I usually do with my students is to develop a thesis work plan with them which usually has to do with when and where to submit and how long to submit a work for review." (SUP3)

Also, according to the study participants, the supervisor unique way of supervision by teaching research and aspects of thesis writing using their own experiences and practical examples. Also, supervisors making students read and apply knowledge smoothen the writing process thereby fostering early competition. Participants' views on this are below

“... if I want to do something, he will give me a sample work that this is what I want. For example if he wants your tables and results to be in a particular way, he will just give you a sample paper”
(STU3)

“... from my own experience as a student until I became a lecturer, ... I used my ups and downs experiences to guide them, so they don't repeat the mistakes that I did.” (SUP1)

This study also suggests that supervisors' motivation of students instigated the prompt completion of the thesis. This is how participants say they were motivated by their supervisors to allow for expedient completion of the thesis

“... there is always a motivation from him (Supervisor) aside from always reminding you of what to do.” (STU2)

“My supervisor will ask why you didn't call. He will push you even when you don't want to.” (STU7)

Lastly, participants indicated that a flexible supervision style also facilitated the apt completion of their thesis. Quotes below represent this postulation

“There were instances where instead of meeting in his office, he will prefer we meet at UCC Science parliament.” (STU1)

Also in this flexible supervision, some supervisors allowed for group supervision where other master students were supervised concurrently. This was what a participant had to say about group supervision.

“He was doing it with us in a team. We were two students that were going to him so when it comes to similar things then we will do it together but when it got to individual topics, he will tackle it case by case.” (STU1)

Suggestions for Supervisor-Related Factors

Participants came up with proposed solutions to aid in student's completion of their thesis. This ranged from team or group supervision to prioritising the success of students. These suggestions are reflected in the participants' quotes below.

“If you choose a topic the supervisor has no idea about, of course, the two of you will find it tough.” (STU3)

“Mostly a student should be given a supervisor who is interested in your topic or the area of interest of the student.” (ADM2)

“If you are a supervisor who has a lot of workloads on you, I don't think is appropriate that you accept to supervise a student once you know you are so much engaged with other works and you wouldn't be able to give the student enough time.” (SUP2)

“There are special cases where departments are doing collaborative work or even the students, especially those in the medical areas. They will be doing something with collaboration from other institutes, we allow them just that the principal supervisor should be from the University of Cape Coast because the student is our student.” (ADM1)

Research Question Three

What Institution-Related Factors Promote the Successful Completion of Master's Theses within the Stipulated Time?

This study also sought to identify institutional factors that promote the successful completion of Master's students' research and thesis writing within the stipulated time. From the analysis based on participants' experiential descriptions, three themes emerged. They are university promoters, department promoters, and recommendations. The themes are presented as follows;

University Promoters

According to participants, these are measures that the university has purposely put in place to facilitate thesis writing and supervision to ultimately lead to apt thesis completion. Participants prompted that one way the university does this is through the Graduate School and the following quotes represent their utterances.

"It is the Graduate School that assigns supervisors to students based on the topic of students and the specialisation of the supervisor."

(SUP2)

"We also do progress reports with the students where we will call students to find out how they are faring with the programme and thesis." (ADM2)

“Graduate School also organised programmes where during our time, tackled problem statement and the research as a whole. And then we had one statistical tool another time they handled.” (STU5)

“The other thing is the conferences, seminars, workshops and exchange programs organised by Graduate School and department for the students on thesis essential topics.” (SUP3)

“It is about research. You will need the information to write your research so in partnership with the library, we are organising this programme for our students where they will be taught how to access information for their research.” (ADM1)

“I also know the Graduate School, we are currently running an e-resource for first-year graduate students. During this period, students are taken through certain things they will need to help them in their thesis writing such as how to look for materials and now we have added the plagiarism test to it. These are some of the measures to help students gather information online. We also have a special hall for seminars.” (ADM2)

Per participants, another measure that the university put in place to achieve successful completion is done through effective supervision. The university does this by way of improving supervisors thus positively impacting thesis supervision. Participants vocalise their take on this measure in the quotes below.

“Support system is also provided. For example, supervisors who are up to the task and have the requisite knowledge and experience in your area of research are assigned to you.” (STU5)

“... the university is doing well in supporting students with their research work. This can be seen in several ways, think about the qualified lecturers the university employs. Mention can also be made about seminars, conferences, and workshops organised for supervisors to service as a means of upgrade. Supervisors are also assessed and evaluated by students through performance appraisal. In short, the supervisors are a great asset of the university and the university makes sure that this asset works effectively and efficiently to contribute to the development of the students.” (SUP3)

Additional participants also stated that the university is helping in the successful completion of the thesis by way of providing financial aid to students. These aids come in the form of grants and scholarships to lessen the financial burden of students writing the thesis. These quotes reflect participants' postulations on the financial assistance from the university.

“Again, financial aid is given by the university in the form of grants, scholarships, and awards. These help students to complete their thesis on time, in that they are motivated and would not feel burdened or troubled to quit the program in search of money. I

know the government also gives bursaries to research students in the course work or the thesis work or both.” (STU5)

“I also had financial support from the school though it wasn’t enough, it was able to solve a problem and all of these aided in my completion on time.” (STU6)

“We recently concluded an awards program, carefully designed to motivate students. This initiative promoted through our media channels, supports students facing financial constraints. This year, we awarded grants to 57 students, ranging from GH¢2,300 to GH¢10,000, to assist with thesis completion. Notably, four recipients received GH¢3,000 each, while others received GH¢5,500. These grants are non-repayable, aiming to encourage timely completion.” (ADM1)

“We support students with research grants to help them complete on time.” (ADM2)

Participants also stipulated that the university provided infrastructure including internet access and libraries among other things. A participant was even of the view that resources were essential for academic performance. Below are the expressions of participants on resources provided

“I can say the university has done well in terms of resources but at the place where we were attending our lectures, there was Wi-Fi that you could connect anytime you wanted the internet to access

materials. But all in all, resources for academic performances were provided”. (STU1)

“The research common room for graduate students at the library was my second home. The place was conducive to air conditioning. The seating arrangement and everything were superb and was good for learning coupled with the internet facility.” (STU5)

“Again, the environment of the learner plays an important role in the early completion of the research work and this is taken care of by the institution or the various departments through the provision of libraries, study rooms, cafeterias, lecture halls, IT resource centers, sports and games facilities, church/mosque to mention but a few. These things are continuously being upgraded to modern specifications all to make the student comfortable psychologically, socially, physically emotionally and spiritually.” (SUP3)

A participant hinted that the university helps in students’ successful completion by prompting students about the deadline and the accompanying penalty fees. This is what the participant divulged

“They also kept telling us that if you don’t finish at a certain time, you will pay extra school fees and this pushed me to work hard to finish before the deadline. I believe this that they put in place helped us a lot.” (STU7)

Lastly, in one of the instances, a participant opined that the university was

prompt to work on the ethical clearance to aid in data collection and this contributed to successful completion. This is what the participant enunciated

“Then when you send your proposal for ethical clearance too, I think they were able to work promptly to review your work and provide you with the letter, the letter that you will use to collect data.” (STU6)

Departmental Promoters

In the view of participants, some departmental initiatives assist in the successful completion of the thesis. Participants talked about how their various departments organised periodic seminars and work-in-progress presentations either on a weekly or monthly basis for example. Participants came out with these quotes.

“... seminars organised by the department. During the period when we were doing the weekly proposal defense within the same period, there were series of seminars we were asked to attend.” (STU5)

“... the institution organised a workshop on how to develop your proposal, then in addition, how to also write the various chapters of your thesis that is one of them.” (STU6)

Also, according to participants another measure that contributed to their successful completion was good relations with faculty and staff in the department. A participant opined that there were times when they were invited over to talk about issues in their thesis writing. Other participants also said good relation with

staff at the department was a great asset in the journey of time completion. Participants also expressed how faculty including the Head of Department had a good rapport and they were concerned about their success. Staff at the department also gave out vital information and reminded students about their thesis and deadline according to participants. This is vocalised as follows.

“In general, the relationship is okay that is between the graduate students and lecturers. The lecturers see graduate students as colleagues so, there is this friendly atmosphere there”. (STU2)

“The Animal Science Department's collaborative atmosphere significantly contributed to my success. Lecturers set aside differences, providing constructive feedback during defenses and seminars. Their willingness to offer guidance outside formal settings, combined with laboratory technicians' support, greatly facilitated my research.” (STU3)

“... we had the Head of Department in the person of (name withheld) who is now the (position withheld). He was punctual, regular, and ever ready to talk to you about your challenges, and on top of that the secretary to that office always served as a reminder and called us regularly, so we were not at the blind side of our work or what we were doing.” (STU4)

“...the department invited us to find out where we have all gotten to and they kept asking why we are trailing behind, what you think you can best do, they kept asking us are there any issues regarding

supervision...” (STU7)

Participants also said their departments provided them with helpful courses, tutorials, and resources including introductory letters to aid data collection. The following statements by participants confirm their opinions on the provision of resources and courses

“The department gave me a letter to submit to a hospital (name withheld).” (STU2)

“I remember some of the chapters we were called specifically to go through tutorials, so we know exactly what to put in there.” (STU7)

When it comes to supervision a participant said the department put in much effort to ensure effective supervision was. This is what was declared about it.

“My department does well as they make sure that a supervisor does not have more than one student to supervise.” (STU2)

Finally, on this theme, participants postulated that the department instilled and instigated students to start the thesis early to complete it on time. A participant mouthed that it is the tradition of the department that students complete on time and this motivated the participant to finish timely and successfully. This is what was said about this issue.

“...the first motivation they gave me was that nobody had exceeded the two years for the M.Phil. I should maintain the record or do a better time, Also, concerning the commencement of the research

work, the department did not wait for me to finish the coursework before I started the thesis work. The department told me once I have my thesis topic, defend my proposal and it is accepted, I can start with the work.” (STU3)

Suggestion for Institutional Factors

Participants made some practical suggestions and the first was the provision of requisite resources needed to facilitate and aid students’ research activities. Participants uttered these quotes to reflect this suggestion.

“In the University of Cape Coast, each department needs to have a mini-laboratory and then there should be a central laboratory. If our mini-laboratory can't handle a task, we move to the central laboratory.” (STU3)

“... student sees the institution or department as their home and a better support system will go a long way to facilitate students to finish on time because the department/institution should have all the necessary equipment or materials. For example, laboratories, chemicals, green-houses, libraries, etc. and they should be available at all times for students to use.” (SUP2)

There was also a suggestion that administrators who work on documentation should attend to thesis documents swiftly to smoothen the thesis writing process. A participant expressed this suggestion in this quote.

“... once the documents are brought to the administrators, they should process them as quickly as possible to make it easy for

students to complete on time.” (SUP2)

The same participant also called for adequate human resources at the departments to man the position of supervisors for effective supervision of the thesis. A participant voiced this.

“You (department) should also have the human resource, talking about the lecturers who should be around to give students the information they need.” (SUP2)

The participant continues to beseech that there should be effective communication between the Graduate School (GS) and the various departments to better serve students as they write their thesis. This is what the participant enunciated.

“The relationship between the GS and the department of the student should be flexible so that the department can easily communicate to the GS and vice versa, which will at least take away the bottom necks.” (SUP2)

Lastly, there was the suggestion that students should abide by policies that govern thesis writing to avoid any inconveniences that will delay the thesis process. This is the quote the participant poured out about this suggestion.

“We (the institution) want students to abide by our policies. The policy will tell you that you have been admitted to a regular programme and have to work within the two years.” (ADM1)

Discussion of Results

This section discusses the results of the three research questions that guided the conduct of this study. They are as follows.

What Student-Related Factors Promote the Successful Completion of Master's Theses within the Stipulated Time?

The question on student-related factors aimed to gather participants' views on specific factors that promote successful thesis completion. The findings revealed six key student-related factors: academic relationships, area of focus, financial stability, research acumen, student commitment, and time management.

Academic relationships were highlighted as particularly beneficial. Participants noted that forming connections with individuals in the academic spectrum, such as faculty members, peers, and undergraduate students, can facilitate successful thesis completion. These relationships can provide valuable feedback, guidance, and emotional support, ultimately contributing to a positive thesis experience. This finding aligns with Chaudhry et al. (2024), who argued that students with strong peer and social support networks tend to experience reduced stress and increased persistence in completing their theses on time. As discussed in the literature review, academic relationships fall under the personal social factor. Baker et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of peer guidance and social support in creating a conducive environment for exchanging ideas and receiving guidance. Furthermore, the study revealed that academic relationships can also involve connections between undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

This concept, referred to as an "academic match" by Crocetti et al. (2023), is positively associated with timely thesis completion.

Another crucial student-related factor identified by participants is the area of focus. According to the data, participants acknowledged that researching an interesting topic can motivate students to complete their thesis successfully. Conversely, selecting unfeasible or overly complex topics can lead to delays or even thesis abandonment. Personal interest in the research area can drive students to overcome challenges during the thesis writing process. This finding is consistent with Renninger and Hidi's (2016) assertion that students' interest in an academic topic enhances their engagement, attention, and overall performance, ultimately leading to successful completion. Some participants suggested conducting extensive reading on the desired research area to identify an interesting yet researchable problem. This approach can help students avoid selecting overly complex topics that may require expertise beyond the master's level, thereby minimising the risk of delays or thesis abandonment.

The next student-related factor identified by participants is good financial standing. Financial stability plays a crucial role in completing a thesis successfully. Research has consistently shown that financial support and access to stable funding sources are key predictors of successful postgraduate study completion (Muthukrishnan et al., 2022; Amoah, 2020). A student's financial status can significantly impact their ability to complete their thesis. Those with sufficient financial resources can fund their research activities, such as travel for data collection or accessing relevant information. Some participants emphasised

the importance of financial planning before enrolling in their postgraduate programs, which helped them complete their thesis successfully. Additionally, participants highlighted the value of research grants and scholarships in facilitating their thesis writing and successful completion. This finding is consistent with Khozaei et al.'s (2015) study, which found that students receiving scholarships tend to be more successful in completing their postgraduate studies, including their thesis.

The factor of research acumen refers to the research knowledge, skills, and expertise that students possess during thesis writing. Students' research expertise, training in research methods, and ability to create well-organised and logical papers are crucial factors that contribute to their timely completion of projects (O'Neil et al., 2018). These skills and knowledge are essential for successful thesis completion and can be developed through attending seminars, workshops, and previous research experiences. Most participants emphasised the importance of consciously developing their research acumen, which aided in their successful thesis completion. Research acumen guides students in approaching specific aspects of the thesis, ensuring a smooth transition between stages. According to the Experiential Learning theory, research acumen develops in four stages. The first two stages involve gaining experience, while the last two focus on transforming that experience, promoting effective learning and thesis completion. This finding supports Kolb and Kolb's (2017) study, which found that students who fail to address each stage of this learning cycle hinder their effective learning and timely completion.

Participants emphasised the importance of student commitment in completing a thesis. They noted that dedication and focus throughout the thesis period are crucial due to the numerous challenges and setbacks that arise during this time. Self-discipline, hard work, dedication, and perseverance are essential to overcome these obstacles. Participants also highlighted the need for students to stay motivated throughout this demanding academic exercise. Committed students remain focused on their long-term goals, undeterred by setbacks, whereas those who are easily discouraged may become uncertain about their next steps. According to Miller (1995), a graduate student is characterised by their consistent effort throughout the dissertation process, leading to timely degree completion. This finding is supported by Arthur's (2022) study, which revealed that supervisors expect students to demonstrate a high level of commitment, significantly impacting thesis completion rates.

Time management was another crucial factor identified by participants as essential for successful thesis completion. Given the time-bound nature of thesis writing, efficient time use is vital. Participants reported that creating a timetable or schedule helped them stay on track and meet deadlines. However, simply drawing up a timetable is insufficient; sticking to the schedule and allowing for minor adjustments is equally important. This enables students to meet deadlines for presenting various aspects of their thesis. This finding is consistent with Nasrullah and Saqib Khan's (2015) study, which found a strong correlation between time management and academic performance among university students. Effective time management, as illustrated by the "pickle jar theory," enables

students to balance their daily routines and academic responsibilities, ultimately leading to successful research and thesis completion.

What Supervisor-Related Factors Promote the Successful Completion of Master's Theses within the Stipulated Time?

Research Question Two investigated the impact of supervisor factors on thesis completion. In-depth participant interviews revealed six critical themes: institutional thesis supervision policies, supervisor accessibility, regular feedback, frequent supervisor-student meetings, positive supervisor-student relationships, and individual supervisor characteristics. These factors collectively facilitated successful thesis completion, highlighting the crucial role supervisors play in guiding students toward academic success.

Analysis of participant interviews at the University of Cape Coast revealed a comprehensive understanding of thesis supervision policies. Participants discussed supervisors' concerns and counterclaims regarding existing policies, highlighting the importance of clear procedures for addressing emerging issues. Notably, the university administration actively disseminates supervision policy information to stakeholders, promoting transparency and addressing lingering confusion. This finding supports Boakye-Yiadom's (2021) assertion that introducing policies and frameworks has improved thesis completion rates in universities across America and Europe. By familiarising themselves with these policies, university stakeholders can better support students in submitting their theses on time.

Participants emphasised that timely and constructive feedback from supervisors is crucial for successful thesis completion. As noted in the literature review, students rely heavily on their supervisors' comments throughout the research and writing process (Adefulu et al., 2020). This guidance replaces traditional lecture-based training, providing students with personalised instruction (Arthur et al., 2023). Timely feedback is essential in education, enabling students to address specific writing issues in their theses (Domaley et al., 2022). The analysis of participant data revealed that prompt feedback from supervisors enhances successful completion. This timely feedback allows students to address comments and issues raised by the supervisor, expediting the writing process. Clear and helpful feedback also communicates the required actions needed to ensure the thesis is written correctly, avoiding delays. This finding is consistent with Pyhältö, Vekkaila, and Keskinen's (2015) study, which found that postgraduate students value their supervisors' availability, including timely feedback, prompt responses to questions, and frequent meetings.

Participants identified the frequency and mode of meetings with supervisors as another crucial factor. Since students value feedback, regular meetings provide opportunities for receiving guidance. The analysis of participant interview data revealed that most meetings were conducted face-to-face, supplemented by emails, WhatsApp, social media platforms, and virtual face-to-face meetings. The frequency of meetings varied, ranging from twice a week to monthly sessions. This allowed supervisors to monitor students' progress, provide motivation, and keep them on track. Frequent meetings encouraged students to

stay focused on their thesis writing, ensuring they had something to present or discuss with their supervisors. This finding supports Meng et al.'s (2018) assertion that a supervisor's availability is essential, encompassing frequent meetings, timely responses to questions, and feedback on written work.

Most participants reported having a good and cordial relationship with their supervisors, which they believed contributed significantly to the successful completion of their theses. This finding is consistent with Pyhältö, Vekkaila, and Keskinen's (2015) study, which found that a good relationship with frequent supervision correlates with a lower risk of attrition. A positive supervisor-student relationship enables open discussions about thesis-related issues, allowing students to seek guidance and advice. It also facilitates discussions about non-academic matters, helping students cope with problems and maintain focus on their thesis. This finding aligns with other studies (Arthur, 2022; Shin et al., 2018), which emphasise the importance of the supervisor-student relationship in thesis completion and student satisfaction.

The data from participants suggests that individual supervisor initiatives play a significant role in nurturing successful thesis completion. Most participants reported that their supervisors gave them autonomy, allowing them to own their work while supervisors guided the thesis writing process. This autonomy enabled participants to showcase their ingenuity, stay committed to the thesis, and take responsibility for the research process. As Meng et al. (2018) noted, autonomy gives students the space and opportunity to make choices and express their viewpoints. This, in turn, fosters satisfaction and commitment to the research

process. A qualitative study by Van Rooij et al. (2022) found that about one-third of non-completers felt forced to work in a direction they didn't wish to follow, highlighting the importance of autonomy in successful completion. Some participants also described the supervision they received as "good," indicating that their supervisors provided the necessary help and support. This good supervision may have included providing materials and resource persons to facilitate thesis writing, as reported by participants. Another individual supervisor factor that emerged was the level of knowledge of the supervisor. Participants found their supervisors' knowledge of research processes beneficial in executing thesis components efficiently. Supervisors with adequate knowledge can provide helpful tips and suggestions, ultimately contributing to successful thesis completion. According to Antwi (2020), supervisors need to be well informed and skilled in the research field to effectively supervise, involving the analysis of research processes, techniques, and procedures.

Participants credited their supervisors' unique approach to supervision, which involved teaching research and thesis aspects using personal experiences and practical examples, as instrumental in their punctual thesis completion. Having gone through the thesis writing process themselves, supervisors empathised with students' challenges and utilised personalised teaching methods. By sharing their experiences and practical examples, supervisors facilitated a deeper understanding of specific thesis tasks, enabling students to complete them effectively. The interview data also revealed that supervisors' motivation played a significant role in timely thesis completion. Motivational strategies, such as

sending reminders and holding face-to-face meetings, made students feel valued and encouraged them to put in extra effort to complete their thesis early (Antwi, 2020; Arthur & Fenyi, 2023). Furthermore, the flexible nature of the supervisors' approach allowed for group supervision, enabling students to learn from their peers' knowledge and approaches to thesis writing. Holding meetings outside of the office space also helped students relax and facilitated the effective sharing of ideas.

Participants proposed several suggestions to promote successful thesis completion. One key suggestion was the implementation of team supervision. This approach would help distribute the workload of supervisors, allowing students to benefit from the expertise of multiple supervisors. Team supervision would also enable a larger number of theses to be supervised within a shorter timeframe. Another suggestion was to prioritise students' success by matching their research interests with supervisors' areas of expertise. This would enable supervisors to provide informed guidance, drawing from their extensive knowledge in the specific thesis area.

What Institution-Related Factors Promote the Successful Completion of Master's Theses within the Stipulated Time?

This question sought participants' perspectives on institutional measures that facilitate successful thesis completion. Thematic analysis revealed that universities have promoters at both the university and departmental/school levels. Additionally, participants offered several suggestions for improvement.

Participants revealed that the university implemented measures to

facilitate smooth thesis writing and effective supervision. One key contribution was the Graduate School, which assigns supervisors with the requisite knowledge and expertise to guide students. This finding aligns with Bertalanffy's Systems Theory, which emphasises the importance of organisational structure and subdivisions in achieving goals (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2020). The Graduate School organises workshops, conferences, and seminars to equip students and supervisors with essential knowledge and skills for thesis writing and supervision. Additionally, the Graduate School monitors student progress through regular reports, which involve feedback from both students and supervisors (Antwi, 2020; Arthur & Fenyi, 2023). These university measures and goals enhance students' research capabilities and supervision quality, ultimately positively impacting thesis completion rates.

The data from participants revealed that the university also supports thesis completion through financial assistance, which comes in the form of grants and scholarships. This aid enables students to fund research activities, such as data collection and acquiring research materials. This finding is consistent with Mills et al.'s (2019) assertion that financial support is crucial for research, as researchers require necessary resources, including funding, to produce high-quality and relevant research outputs.

Participants emphasised that the university facilitates thesis completion by providing essential infrastructure, including internet access and libraries. These resources enable students to access necessary information for their research. Additionally, having dedicated spaces for research activities, such as libraries and

discussion rooms, allows students to complete their theses successfully and on time. The library plays a vital role in research, serving as a gateway to information and providing researchers with access to knowledge and facts to support their studies (Attakumah, 2023). This finding aligns with Barrett, Treves, Shmis, and Ambasz's (2019) assertion that libraries offer materials, information resources, facilities, and services that support teaching, learning, and research. Notably, this aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4): Quality Education, which aims to create inclusive, safe, and effective learning environments for all (UNESCO, 2021). Specifically, SDG 4 targets upgrading education facilities to ensure they are child, disability, and gender-sensitive (United Nations, 2015).

Participants praised the university's proactive approach to deadline reminders and streamlined ethical clearance processing, citing these factors as essential for successful thesis completion. Regular reminders kept students on track to meet deadlines, while efficient ethical clearance processing enabled timely data collection and analysis. Additionally, participants appreciated the department's prompt processing of introductory letters, which facilitated smooth data collection. Introductory letters are crucial, as they inform research participants about the data collection exercise and its purpose. Boakye-Yiadom (2021) supports this view, emphasising that prompt processing of student requests promotes timely completion. Studies by Mrisho and Essack (2021) and others (García & García, 2021; Harrison, 2021) highlight the importance of adequate resources, including personnel, logistics, and finance, in preventing delays and

ensuring effective research activities. Efficient institutional support prevents prolonged timelines, pressure on research budgets, and complications in researcher-funder relationships, ultimately affecting researchers' satisfaction and ethics compliance (Mrisho & Essack, 2021).

Another theme that emerged under institutional factors promoting successful thesis completion was departmental promoters. These are measures implemented by specific departments at the University of Cape Coast to facilitate students' successful thesis completion. Participants identified periodic seminars and work-in-progress presentations as key departmental promoters. These events allow students to brief the department on their thesis progress, receive corrections and clarifications, and benefit from constructive criticism from faculty members. This feedback helps refine the research direction, fostering successful thesis completion. Regular presentations also motivate students to work diligently and produce high-quality research outputs. Furthermore, some departments offer courses and tutorials on thesis writing, which participants found beneficial for their successful completion. These courses likely covered essential aspects of thesis writing, equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to produce quality research outputs. Without such knowledge, students may struggle to meet research requirements, leading to unsuccessful completion. This finding aligns with the experiential theory, which posits that knowledge results from participation in seminars, conferences, and work-in-progress presentations (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). Effective instruction in research methodology and theory

conceptualisation during seminars directly influences students' research and thesis writing quality, ultimately impacting timely completion.

Another vital factor implemented by departments to promote successful thesis completion was the provision of resources. This included creating a conducive learning environment, providing access to essential information, and offering departmental libraries as a hub for research activities. Participants appreciated the availability of resources such as open applications for data analysis, which alleviated the burden of searching for and employing outdated methods. By providing these resources, departments enabled students to utilise effective and efficient statistical tools, meeting contemporary research and data analysis standards. This finding supports Barrett, Treves, Shmis, and Ambasz's (2019) assertion that libraries provide essential materials, information resources, facilities, and services that support educational institutions' activities, ultimately contributing to successful thesis writing.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an in-depth interpretation, explanation, and discussion of the study's findings concerning the literature review. The factors contributing to successful thesis completion were identified through data collected from participants. During the thematic analysis, participants' perceptions from the interview data were carefully examined and compared to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing successful master's thesis completion at the University of Cape Coast. This chapter also integrated the findings with the research question and relevant literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This final chapter summarises the study's key findings, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations to facilitate successful thesis completion. The chapter overviews the research process, highlights the main results, and suggests areas for further investigation.

Summary

The primary objective of thesis writing is to equip students with research skills, enabling them to conduct independent, systematic studies and develop practical solutions to problems. However, this task can be daunting for many, requiring skills, aptitudes, and determination.

Despite the numerous challenges faced by postgraduate students in completing their theses, some manage to complete their work within the stipulated timeframe and earn their degrees. Nevertheless, the factors contributing to their success remain unclear, highlighting the need for an investigation into the factors promoting successful thesis completion.

A review of existing literature reveals a scarcity of studies focusing specifically on master's thesis projects at the University of Cape Coast. This knowledge gap prompted the current study, which aimed to identify the factors facilitating successful thesis completion at the University of Cape Coast. To achieve this objective, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. what student-related factors promote the successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time?
2. what supervisor-related factors promote the successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time?
3. what institution-related factors promote the successful completion of master's theses within the stipulated time?

In addressing these research questions, the phenomenological study research design was employed. Ethical issues were considered in the conduct of the study and trustworthiness of the results was a paramount feature of the study. Qualitative data was obtained from twelve (12) participants who were made up of students, administrators, and supervisors. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants. Interview data were generated by transcribing interviews verbatim and with the help of the ATLAS.ti software, codes were generated from the data, and themes and overarching themes emerged.

Key Findings

In this study, an overarching theme was developed from the three main themes to expatiate the factors that contribute to the successful completion of the master's thesis at the University of Cape Coast. The following are the key findings of the study.

1. Healthy academic relationships with colleagues and other scholars, students' research interests, adequate financial resources, students' previous knowledge of research, perseverance, and commitment contribute to the successful completion of the thesis. However,

effective time management and the type of study (full or part-time) do not affect the successful completion of the thesis.

2. Supervisor accessibility, timely feedback, regular meetings, and positive relationships significantly enhance the successful completion of the thesis. Additionally, supervisor characteristics such as autonomy granting, high-quality supervision, resource provision, and expertise also contribute to successful thesis completion.
3. Graduate School policies, effective supervision measures, financial aid, infrastructure provision, deadline reminders, efficient documentation processing, periodic seminars, and work-in-progress presentations contribute to successful thesis completion.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the study's principal findings, aligning seamlessly with the research objectives and questions, and providing meaningful insights into the phenomenon under study.

Firstly, informal academic relationships provide supplementary guidance and support, mitigating risks to timelines, reputation, and morale. A well-defined research focus and students' research skills, perseverance, focus, and time management also predict thesis success.

Secondly, thesis completion success is significantly influenced by the synergistic relationship between frequent supervisor meetings, positive interpersonal dynamics, and constructive feedback. Supervisor accessibility and effective communication are crucial for optimal outcomes.

Lastly, institutional support mechanisms, including university and departmental promoters, are instrumental in facilitating thesis completion. These promoters enhance academic quality and reputation. The absence of such mechanisms compromises academic quality, departmental reputation, and thesis completion rates. The study highlights the importance of sustained institutional commitment, proactive institutional and departmental engagement in thesis supervision and writing, and the need for bidirectional communication and tailored support in supervisor-student relationships.

Recommendations

Based on the study's key findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed for stakeholders, policymakers, and academics to improve the thesis completion process. These recommendations are categorised into policy and practice imperatives.

Policy Recommendations

1. Provision of Resources

Institutions should prioritise resource allocation to facilitate research. This includes allocating sufficient budgets to equip libraries, laboratories, and research centers with modern facilities, and hiring experienced research staff, technicians, and librarians to support students. Establishing well-equipped, safety-compliant resources in each department fosters hands-on research and data collection. Regular upgrades, clear management policies, and inter-researcher collaboration are also essential to ensure efficient resource utilisation, ultimately enhancing research quality, supporting innovation, and attracting top talent.

2. Streamlined Documentation

Streamlining thesis documentation and approval processes can significantly reduce administrative burdens. To achieve this, institutions should implement digital submission and tracking systems, simplify approval procedures, and provide clear guidelines. Designating specific staff for thesis administration can also ensure efficiency and consistency.

Additionally, regular training for administrators can help promote smooth operations and minimise delays.

3. Communication Channels

Establishing formal communication protocols between the Graduate School and departments is essential for effective information sharing and issue resolution. Regular meetings, online forums, and designated communication officers can facilitate seamless communication. By implementing clear protocols and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, institutions can promote cohesion and ultimately support student success.

4. Policy Enforcement

To ensure student compliance with thesis writing policies, institutions must establish clear guidelines, communicate expectations, and outline consequences. Developing comprehensive policies, providing training, and regularly reviewing updates are essential steps. Consistent enforcement of these policies maintains academic integrity, ensures consistency, and ultimately supports student success.

5. Financial Framework

Institutions should establish a comprehensive financial framework to support thesis research, allocating a minimum of 20% of the institutional budget to research and thesis support, while ensuring transparency and accountability. To maximise resources effectively, institutions should develop competitive research grants to encourage innovation.

Additionally, prioritising funding for interdisciplinary projects can foster collaboration and lead to groundbreaking research. Furthermore, fostering public-private partnerships can secure additional resources, while implementing efficient resource utilisation strategies can minimise waste and maximise returns. Ultimately, regular review and assessment of financial allocations are crucial to ensure optimal impact and support for thesis research.

Practice Recommendations

1. Administrator Timely Actions

Expedited thesis documentation and approval processes can significantly alleviate delays. To achieve this, administrators should prioritise urgent requests and communicate status updates to students. Providing guidance and support throughout the process is also essential. Furthermore, ensuring continuity during staff transitions maintains efficiency and minimises disruptions. By taking timely actions, administrators can enhance the student experience, reduce anxiety, and ensure compliance with institutional requirements.

2. Effective Communication

Open communication channels between students, supervisors, and administrators are vital for fostering collaboration and promoting a positive thesis experience. Regular meetings and constructive feedback mechanisms help to build trust and understanding, while established conflict resolution protocols ensure that issues are addressed promptly. By

demonstrating empathy and communicating clearly, institutions can ensure student satisfaction and set the stage for successful thesis completion.

3. Student Responsibility

To ensure smooth progress and successful thesis completion, students must take an active role in understanding thesis policies, procedures, and timelines. This includes meeting deadlines, maintaining regular communication with supervisors, and seeking guidance when needed. By practicing effective time management and autonomy, students can take ownership of their research and set themselves up for success.

4. Pre-Thesis Preparation

Institutions play a crucial role in preparing students for thesis success. Comprehensive pre-thesis preparation is essential and can include orientation programs, thesis writing workshops, and policy briefings. Additionally, supervisor-student matching and research proposal development support can help students feel more prepared and confident as they begin writing their thesis, ultimately reducing anxiety and setting them up for success.

5. Regular Updates and Reporting

Regular progress meetings, timely reports, and issue escalation protocols are essential for ensuring thesis completion. By celebrating milestones and completion, institutions can foster a sense of accountability and motivation among students. This practice promotes open communication between

students and supervisors, helps identify potential issues early on, and ensures that any problems are addressed promptly.

6. Financial Framework

Effective financial management is vital for thesis success. To manage resources efficiently, researchers should explore cost-effective methods, materials, and technologies, and utilise resource-sharing mechanisms among departments. Developing realistic budgets, tracking expenses, and reporting regularly are also essential. Additionally, institutions can support researchers by providing opportunities to develop grant writing skills, access external funding, and participate in financial planning workshops. To facilitate research excellence, institutions should also offer research assistantships, thesis completion funds, conference travel grants, and professional development support.

Suggestion for Further Research

This study has identified the key factors that contribute to the successful completion of master's theses at the University of Cape Coast. It has also provided recommendations for stakeholders to improve the thesis writing process. To broaden the understanding of this topic, further research is needed to explore the perspectives of students, supervisors, and administrators across all public universities, shedding light on the factors that promote successful thesis completion.

REFERENCES

- Adefulu, A., Farinloye, T., & Mogaji, E. (2020). Factors influencing postgraduate students' university choice in Nigeria. In *Higher education marketing in Africa: Explorations into student choice* (pp. 187-225). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Akparep, Y. J., Jengre, E., & Abaamah, D. (2017). Demystifying the blame game in the delays of graduation of research students in Universities in Ghana: The case of University for Development Students. *European Journal of Business and Innovation Research*, 5(1), 34-50.
- Ali, P., Watson, P., & Dhingra, K. (2016). Postgraduate research students and their supervisors' attitudes towards supervision. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 11, 227-241. doi: 10.28945/3541
- Alkhateeb, H. M., Abushihab, E. F., Alkhateeb, B. H., & Alkhateeb, R. H. (2022). Academic self-concept and its relationship to academic achievement among university students. *International Journal on Social and Education Sciences (IJonSES)*, 4(4), 517-528. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijonSES.342>
- Amedahe, F. K., & Asamoah-Gyimah, E. (2016). Introduction to measurement and evaluation.
- Amehoe, C. K., & Bortha, R. (2013). *Postgraduate throughput at the University of Ghana* Citeseer.
- Anim-Frimpong, A., Osei-Amankwah, L., & Kyeremeh, D. (2020). Dilemmas of completing doctor of philosophy thesis in Ghanaian universities: A multi-

case study perspectives. *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development Vol. 8, No.4, pp.51-62.*

Antwi, S. B. (2020). Analysis of enrollment, retention, completion, and attrition rates of regular and distance learning students in the master's education programmes at KNUST (Doctoral dissertation). Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

Asiamah, N., Mensah, H. K., & Oteng-Abayie, E. (2017). General, target, and accessible population: Demystifying the concepts for effective sampling. *The Qualitative Report, 22*(6), 1607-1621.

Attakumah, D. (2023). Educational inputs as predictors of internal efficiency in postgraduate research degree programmes in Ghanaian public universities (Doctoral dissertation). Kenyatta University.

Arthur, P. K. M. (2022). *Challenges of Students under Co-Supervisors at the Department of a University in Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Education Winneba).

Arthur, R., & Fenyi, D. A. (2023). Towards Minimizing the Delay/Non-completion Rate of Research Master's Degree in Ghana: ESL Students' Perspective of the Challenges of Thesis Work. *Linguistics Initiative, 3*(2), 125-139.

Baker, V. L., Pifer, M. J., & Flemiken, M. (2022). Mentoring in higher education. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Mentoring* (pp. 237-253). Cambridge University Press.

- Barrett, P., Treves, A., Shmis, T., & Ambasz, D. (2019). The impact of school infrastructure on learning: A synthesis of the evidence.
- Bazrafkan, L., Yousefy, A., Amini, M., & Yamani, N. (2019). The journey of thesis supervisors from novice to expert: a grounded theory study. *BMC Medical Education*, 19(1), 1-12.
- Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (2019). Principles of biomedical ethics (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Boakye-Yiadom, M. (2021). Students' Satisfaction with the University of Cape Coast Residential and Academic Experiences: Students' Satisfaction with the University of Cape Coast Residential and Academic Experiences. *Journal of Educational Management*, 11, 103-119.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 345-357.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Chaudhry, S., Tandon, A., Shinde, S., & Bhattacharya, A. (2024). Student psychological well-being in higher education: The role of internal team environment, institutional, friends and family support and academic engagement. *PLoS One*, 19(1), e0297508. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297508>

- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed., p. 4). Sage.
- Crocetti, E., Albarello, F., Meeus, W., & Rubini, M. (2023). Identities: A developmental social-psychological perspective. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 34(1), 161-201.
- Devos, C., Boudrenghien, G., Van der Linden, N., Azzi, A., Frenay, M., Galand, B., & Klein, O. (2017). Doctoral Students' Experiences Leading to Completion or Attrition: A Matter of Sense, Progress and Distress. *European Journal of Psychology of Education* 32: 61–77. doi: 10.1007/s10212-016-0290-0
- Destin, M., & Williams, J. L. (2020). The connection between student identities and outcomes related to academic persistence. *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology*, 2(1), 437-460.
- Essuman, J. (2020). *A Qualitative Exploration of Factors Causing Mphil Students' Delay in Completion of Thesis at University Of Cape Coast* (Doctoral dissertation, UCC).
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2019). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- European University Institute. (2020). Master's education in Europe; *Current trends and future challenges*.

- Ezelote, J. C., Eleanor, A., Judith, O., & Joy, M. (2021). Academic stress and coping strategies among postgraduate students: Comparative study of universities in Imo State, Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, 15(7), 26-42
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2020). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1-13.
- Gardner, S. K. (2019). Supporting master's student success: A framework for institutional action. *Journal of Graduate Education*, 11(1), 19-32.
- García, Y. García, B. E. (2021) 'To What Factors Do University Students Attribute Their Academic Success?', *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, vol. 14(1), 1-8.
- Glesne, C. (2022). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. (6th ed.) Pearson.
- Gyamera, G. O., & Asare, W. (2023). A critical examination of factors influencing international students' choice to study in Ghanaian higher educational institutions. *Cogent Education*, 10(1), 2186014. doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2023.2186014
- Hatch, M. J., & Cunliffe, A. L. (2020). *Organisation theory: Modern, symbolic and postmodern perspectives*. Oxford University Press.
- Harrison, J. (2021). 9 unique reasons to pursue a master's degree. <https://abound.college/gradschool/advice/9-reasons-pursue-masters-degree/>

- Institutional Research and Planning Office, University of Ghana. (2021). Facts and figures. <https://irpo.ug.edu.gh/facts-figures>
- Kahu, E. R., Picton, C., & Nelson, K. (2020). Pathways to engagement: A longitudinal study of the first-year student experience in the educational interface. *Higher Education*, 79, 657-673.
- Khozaei, F., Naidu, S., Khozaei, Z., & Salleh, N. A. (2015). *An exploratory study of factors that affect the research progress of international PhD students from the Middle East*. Education+ Training.
- Kiley, M. (2019). Master's supervision: A European perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38(4), 654-665.
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2017). Learning style inventory. In *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning* (pp. 1711-1714). Springer.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J. L., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2020). Piecing together the student success puzzle: Research, propositions, and recommendations. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 46(1), 1-144
- Kumar, S., & Kumar, N. (2020). A stepping stone to academic excellence. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 9(2), 1-8.
- Kumar, V., & Seth, R. (2020). Postgraduate education: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 9(1), 1-10. doi: 10.15640/jehd.v9n1a1
- Kumar, R. (2019). *Research methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners* (Fifth edition). SAGE.

- Kwafoa, P., Barfi, K. A., & Agyapong, E. M. (2019). Use of electronic resources by postgraduate students in the University of Cape Coast.
- Levecque, K., Anseel, F., De Beuckelaer, A., Van der Heyden, J., & Gisle, L. (2017). Work organisation and mental health problems in PhD students. *Research Policy*, 46(4), 868-879.
- Liang, W., Liu, S., & Zhao, C. (2021). Impact of student-supervisor relationship on postgraduate students' subjective well-being: a study based on longitudinal data in China. *Higher Education*, 1-33.
- Lindsay, S. (2015). What works for doctoral students in completing their thesis? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(2), 183-196.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). Designing qualitative research (6thed.). Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Martzoukou, K. (2021). Academic libraries in COVID-19: a renewed mission for digital literacy. *Library management*, 42(4/5), 266-276.
- Matsolo, M. J., Ningpuanyeh, W. C., & Susuman, A. S. (2018). Factors affecting the enrolment rate of students in higher education institutions in the Gauteng province, South Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 53(1), 64-80
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Meng, Y., & Zhao, C. (2018). Academic supervisor leadership and its influencing mechanism on postgraduate creativity in China. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 29, 32-44.

- Miller, M. (1995). *ABD status and degree completion: A student's perspective*. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Francisco.
- Mills, J., & Birks, M. (2019). *Qualitative methodology: A practical guide*. Sage Publications
- Morgan, G. (2019). *Images of organization*. Sage Publications.
- Mulder, P. (2017). Pickle Jar Theory. Retrieved [2017] from Tools Hero: <https://www.toolshero.com/effectiveness/pickle-jar-theory>.
- Nasrullah, S., & Saqib Khan, M. (2015). The Impact of Time Management on the Students' Academic Achievements.
- Muthukrishnan, P., Gurnam, K., Hoon, T., Geethanjali, N., & Chan, Y. F. (2022). Key factors influencing graduation on time among postgraduate students: A PLS-SEM approach. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 18, 51. doi: 10.24191/ajue.v18i1.17169
- Mwamwenda, T.S. (2019). The significance of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree in higher education. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 8(6), 1-9.
- Nouri, J., Larsson, K., & Saqr, M. (2019, September). Identifying factors for master thesis completion and non-completion through learning analytics and machine learning. In *European Conference on Technology Enhanced Learning* (pp. 28-39). Springer.

- Odularu, O. I., & Akande, J. O. (2024). Reflection of experiences with academic supervisors, supervisees, and issues of power. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 38(2), 254-273.
- O'Meara, K., Kuvaeva, A., Nyunt, G., Waugaman, C., & Jackson, R. (2017). Asked more often: Gender differences in faculty workload in research universities and the work interactions that shape them. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(6), 1154-1186.
- O'Neil, S., & dos Santos, C. (2018). Factors affecting time to completion of master's mini-dissertations. *Spaces, journeys, and new horizons for postgraduate supervision. Stellenbosch: AFRICAN SUN MeDIA*, 177-192.
- Parsons, T. (1971). *The system of modern societies*. Prentice Hall.
- Pizzolato, D., & Dierickx, K. (2023). Research integrity supervision practices and institutional support: a qualitative study. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 21(3), 427-448.
- Pyhältö, K., Vekkaila, J., & Keskinen, J. (2015). Fit matters in the supervisory relationship: doctoral students and supervisors' perceptions about the supervisory activities. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 52(1), 4-16.
- Rauf, F. A. (2016). Challenges of thesis work: Towards minimizing the non-completion rate in the postgraduate degree program. *Concern*, 8(7). 113-124
- Renninger, K. A., & Hidi, S. E. (2016). *The power of interest for motivation and engagement*. Routledge

- Resnik, D. B. (2020). What is ethics in research & why is it important? National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.
- Retnaningsih, R., Kartowagiran, B., Istiyono, E., & Masjid, A. (2018). Determination of factors completion thesis in era internet of think. *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Science and Technology for an Internet of Things*. European Alliance for Innovation (EAI).
- Rong'uno, S. K. (2016). *Institutional and student-related factors and Doctoral Studies completion rates in Education at selected Public Universities in Kenya* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi].
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Publications.
- Saunders, M. N., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students* (7thed.). Pearson Education.
- Senyametor, F., Domaley, V., Ahorsu-Walker, J., Abreh, M. K., & Mills, C. A. (2022). Determinants of Postgraduate Thesis Completion: Do Academic Stress and Burnout Play a Role? *Africa Education Review*, 19(4-6), 73-95.
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., ...&Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: *Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization*. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893-1907.

- Shin, J. C., Kim, M., & Lee, M. (2018). Social integration and student success among international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 22(1), 34-48. doi: 10.1177/1028315316685865
- Silberman, G., & Kahn, K. L. (2011). "Burdens on research imposed by institutional review boards: the state of the evidence and its implications for regulatory reform." *The Milbank Quarterly* 89(4), 599–627
- Silverman, D. (2017). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Smith-Norris, M., & Hansen, J. (2018). Graduate programme outcomes in history, 1990–2015: a humanities case study in Canada. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 50(3), 174–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2017.1405916>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). The University of Chicago Press.
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 (A/RES/70/1).
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2021). Sustainable Development Goal 4. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/sdg4>
- University of Cape Coast, School of Graduate Studies (2016) *Guidelines for preparing and presenting project work, dissertation, and thesis*. School of Graduate Studies

- University of Cape Coast, School of Graduate Studies, School of Graduate Studies. (2020). *Congregation brochure* (p.42). [UCC SGS Publication]
- Van Rooij, E., Fokkens-Bruinsma, M., & Jansen, E. (2021). Factors that influence PhD candidates' success: The importance of PhD project characteristics. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 43(1), 48-67.
- Von Bertalanffy, L. & Rapaport, A. (1958). General Systems: Yearbook of the Society for the Advancement of General Systems Theory, Vol. I 1956. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 9 (34):170-171.
- Von Bertalanffy, L. (1967). General theory of systems: Application to psychology. *Social Science Information*, 6(6), 125-136.
- Wright, J. (2002). Time management: The pickle jar theory. *A List Apart*, 146,1-5.
- Wright, J.D., & Wilson, K.B. (2020). Master's education; Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 9(2), 9-18.
- Zheng, Y., Yu, S., Wang, B., & Zhang, Y. (2019). *Exploring student engagement with supervisor feedback on master's thesis: Insights from a case study*. Innovations in Education and Teaching International.

APPENDIX A

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA
TRINITY CONGREGATION
POST OFFICE BOX 23
MAMPONG- AKUAPIM.
TEL: 0243731119
EMAIL daoffei@stu.ucc.edu.gh

2nd September, 2022

THE CHAIRPERSON
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
CAPE COAST.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

I am a student of IEPA perusing Master of Philosophy in Administration in Higher Education.
I humbly write to request for ethical clearance to enable me to collect data for my thesis writing.
My research topic is: Factors That Promote Successful Completion of The Master's Thesis: The
Case Of University Of Cape Coast.

The study will demand data from Administrators, Supervisors and Student of UCC via interview.

I hope my application would meet your kind consideration.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,



David A. Abboah-Offei
EO /AHP/19/ 0011

APPENDIX B

Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast
30th August, 2022.

The Chairman,
Institutional Review Board
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast

Dear Sir,

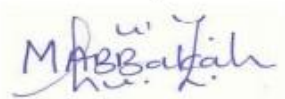
REQUEST FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE – DAVID AYESU ABBOAH-OFFEI

I, as the Principal Supervisor of Mr. David Ayesu Abboah-Offei, write in support of his application to the Institutional Review Board for ethical clearance to enable him to proceed with the collection of data for the completion of his thesis for the award of MPhil (Educational Administration).

David is third year MPhil student of the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. He has successfully defended his proposal and is currently at the data collection stage of his thesis entitled "Factors that promote successful completion of the Master's thesis: The case of University of Cape Coast."

I hope his quest will meet your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully,



Prof. Marie Afua Baah Bakah

APPENDIX C



Our Ref.: IEPA-UNESCO /1.2/VOL.1/0140

31st August, 2022

The Chairman
Institutional Review Board
UCC

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE – DAVID A. ABBOAH-OFFEI (EO/AHP/19/0011)

We write to introduce to you Mr. **David A. Abboah-Offei** with registration number **(EO/AHP/19/0011)** an MPhil student pursuing Administration in Higher Education.

We wish to inform you that the Institute has approved Mr. Abboah-Offei's research proposal.

We would be grateful if ethical clearance could be granted to him to collect his data. His research topic is: **"Factors that Promote Successful Completion of the Master's Thesis: The Case of University of Cape Coast"**.

Kindly find attached a copy of his proposal for your perusal.

Counting on your usual support.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Francis Ansah
HEAD, ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES
For: **DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL (ACADEMIC PROGS. & PROFESSIONAL DEV'T)**

cc: Director-General
Ag. Deputy Director-General (Admin. & General Services)
Mr. **David A. Abboah-Offei**, IEPA



Address :
CC 145-9167



Phone :
+233 3320-91478 / +23303321-30571



Email :



Website :



APPENDIX D

**EXPLORING FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL
COMPLETION OF MASTER’S THESES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAPE COAST.**

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MASTER’S STUDENTS

1. What program did you read?
2. When did you start and complete the program?
3. Would you say you completed on time? (Probe)
4. What are your insights into thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies at the University of Cape Coast?
5. In your view, do you accept the notion that thesis writing is a difficult task? (Probe)
6. How were you motivated to complete your thesis promptly?
7. What role did your social support (Family, peers, and Faculty) play in your thesis completion?
8. What were some of the things that you did personally that helped to stay committed and finish your thesis timely?
9. How did your finances permit you to complete your thesis timely?
10. Can you describe the relationship you had with your supervisor?
11. How often do you meet your supervisor?
12. How was the quality of supervision you received from your supervisor?
13. How did your supervisor support you in writing and completing your thesis in a timely fashion?

14. Were you given freedom by your supervisor in designing and executing your research? (Probe) How?
15. How did your Faculty/Department/School equip you with the essential skills needed for the successful completion of your thesis?
16. What were some of the resources and materials that your Faculty/Department/School provided to aid your thesis completion?

APPENDIX E

**EXPLORING FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL
COMPLETION OF MASTER’S THESES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAPE COAST.**

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS

1. What are your insights into thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies at the University of Cape Coast?
2. What are your pieces of knowledge and opinions on Master’s students’ thesis writing at UCC?
3. How do you keep your students motivated to complete their thesis promptly?
4. How often do you meet your students?
5. How does your relationship with students ensure their timely completion?
6. How do you provide a conducive environment for students to carry out their research?
7. In what ways do you provide feedback to your students?
8. What are the materials and resources that the Faculty/Department/School put in place to enable students to complete their thesis promptly?
9. In your opinion what are the other things the Faculty/Department/School can put in place to enable students to finish their thesis promptly?

APPENDIX F

**EXPLORING FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL
COMPLETION OF MASTER’S THESES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAPE COAST.**

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

1. What are your insights into thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies at the University of Cape Coast?
2. What are your pieces of knowledge and opinions on Master’s students’ thesis writing at UCC?
3. In what ways do you provide a conducive environment for students to carry out their research?
4. In what ways do you assist in student’s thesis writing?
5. How do you provide student welfare support services?
6. How are departmental guidelines and expectations made known to Postgraduate Students?
7. How do you ensure effective supervision of students?