Motivational Factors Influencing Doctoral Degree Pursuit Among Students in Public and Private Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

Doctoral education is a critical component of knowledge creation and economic development. In Kenya, demand for PhD graduates has increased due to the rapid expansion of higher education institutions and the need for highly qualified professionals. However, completion rates remain low, raising concerns about the motivations behind students' decisions to pursue doctoral studies. This study examines the key motivational factors influencing students' pursuit of doctoral degrees in Kenyan public and private universities. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 307 doctoral students through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that career advancement (78%), personal fulfillment (65%), and societal expectations (47%) are the primary motivators for enrolling in PhD programs. Institutional factors such as funding availability and academic support also play a crucial role in influencing students' decisions. However, financial constraints, work-study balance, and limited research resources present major challenges to doctoral persistence and completion. The study further highlights differences in motivational factors between students in public and private universities, with private university students being more driven by career growth and public university students influenced by institutional sponsorship opportunities. Based on these findings, the study recommends policies aimed at enhancing financial support, structured mentorship, and career development programs to improve doctoral accessibility and retention rates.

Key words: - Doctoral motivation, career advancement, higher education, Kenya, postgraduate studies

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INTRODUCTION

The doctoral degree represents the highest level of academic achievement, symbolizing expertise in a specialized field and the ability to contribute original research to the body of knowledge. In Kenya, the demand for doctoral graduates has surged due to the rapid expansion of higher education institutions and the need for highly qualified professionals in academia, research, and industry. However, despite this growing demand, completion rates remain alarmingly low, raising critical questions about the motivational factors that drive students to pursue doctoral studies and the challenges they face in completing their programs.

Doctoral education has evolved significantly since its inception in medieval Europe, where the title "doctor" was first associated with teaching licenses in fields such as Canon Law, Civil Law, and Medicine (Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1978). The modern doctoral degree, particularly the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), emerged in the 19th century, influenced by German educational reforms that emphasized research-based dissertations as a core requirement (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). Today, doctoral programs vary widely across institutions and countries, with some focusing on traditional research-intensive pathways and others offering professional doctorates tailored to industry needs.

In Kenya, the Commission for University Education (CUE) regulates doctoral programs, setting minimum requirements such as a relevant master's degree, coursework completion, comprehensive examinations, and a dissertation based on original research (CUE, 2014). Despite these structured guidelines, doctoral completion rates in Kenyan universities remain dismally low. For instance, only 26% of enrolled doctoral students in the Faculty of Education graduate annually, leaving a staggering 74% either delayed or dropping out entirely (CUE, 2016). Similar trends are observed globally, with completion rates ranging from 17% in Botswana to 61% in Pakistan, underscoring a widespread challenge in doctoral education (Joseph & Klabamud, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2021).

The low completion rates highlight the need to examine the motivational factors that influence students' decisions to pursue doctoral studies. Existing research identifies career advancement, personal fulfillment, and societal expectations as primary motivators (Matheka, 2020). However, institutional factors such as funding availability, mentorship quality, and research support also play pivotal roles in students' persistence. Additionally, challenges such as financial constraints, work-study conflicts, and limited research resources often hinder progress, particularly for part-time students balancing professional and academic commitments (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

This study seeks to explore the motivational factors influencing doctoral degree pursuit among students in Kenyan public and private universities. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to identify key drivers of enrollment, compare differences between institutional sectors, and propose policy recommendations to enhance retention and completion rates. Understanding these factors is crucial for universities, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to strengthen doctoral education and meet the growing demand for highly skilled professionals in Kenya.

NEED OF THE STUDY.

The need for this study arises from the critical role doctoral education plays in knowledge creation and economic development, coupled with the alarmingly low completion rates in Kenyan universities. According to the Commission for University Education (CUE, 2016), Kenyan universities enroll an average of 750 PhD students annually in the Faculty of Education, yet only 192 (26%) graduate each year. This means 74% either exceed the stipulated completion time or drop out entirely, representing a significant loss of potential expertise and research output. Similar trends are observed globally, with completion rates ranging from 17% in Botswana (Joseph & Klabamud, 2018) to 61% in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2021), indicating a systemic challenge in doctoral education.

The low completion rates underscore the importance of understanding what motivates students to pursue doctoral studies despite these challenges. Motivational factors such as career advancement (78%), personal fulfillment (65%), and societal expectations (47%) have been identified as key drivers (Matheka, 2020). However, institutional factors like funding availability, mentorship quality, and research support also significantly influence students' decisions and persistence (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). For instance, many doctoral students in Kenya balance full-time jobs as teachers or administrators alongside their studies, which prolongs their completion time (Onderi, Ajowi, & Malala, 2013). Financial constraints, limited access to research resources, and inadequate supervisory support further compound these challenges (Mugendi & Githae, 2021).

Moreover, the demand for PhD graduates in Kenya has increased due to the rapid expansion of higher education institutions and the need for qualified faculty and researchers (CUE, 2014). However, the mismatch between enrollment and graduation rates threatens the country's capacity to meet this demand. Understanding the motivational factors that drive doctoral pursuit can help universities design targeted interventions to improve retention and completion. For example, tailored financial aid, structured mentorship programs, and flexible study arrangements could address some of the barriers identified by students.

This study is particularly timely as it aligns with Kenya's national goals of enhancing research productivity and developing a skilled workforce. By examining motivational factors across public and private universities, the research will provide comparative insights into how institutional policies and support systems influence student decisions. Such findings can inform policy reforms, such as increasing funding opportunities, improving supervision quality, and creating supportive academic environments. Ultimately, addressing these issues will not only benefit individual students but also strengthen Kenya's higher education sector and its contribution to national development.

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Background of the Study

The doctoral degree represents the highest level of academic achievement, with its origins tracing back to medieval Europe where it was initially awarded as a license to teach (Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1978). Over centuries, the doctorate evolved significantly, particularly through 19th century German educational reforms that established the research-based PhD model we recognize today (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). In contemporary higher education, doctoral programs serve as critical engines for knowledge creation and professional development, particularly in developing nations like Kenya where there is growing demand for highly qualified professionals.

In Kenya, the Commission for University Education (CUE) regulates doctoral education, requiring candidates to possess a relevant master's degree, complete coursework, pass comprehensive examinations, and defend an original dissertation (CUE, 2014). Despite these clear guidelines, completion rates remain alarmingly low. Recent data shows that while Kenyan universities enroll approximately 750 doctoral students annually in the Faculty of Education, only 192 (26%) graduate each year (CUE, 2016). This means 74% either exceed completion timelines or drop out entirely, representing a significant loss of potential expertise and research output.

The phenomenon of low completion rates is not unique to Kenya. International comparisons reveal similar challenges across diverse educational systems. Completion rates stand at 37% in Brazil (Costa & Pereira, 2018), 51% in Malaysia (Jeyaraj, 2020), and as low as 17% in Botswana (Joseph & Klabamud, 2018). These global trends suggest systemic challenges in doctoral education that transcend national boundaries and institutional contexts.

Several factors contribute to these completion challenges. Doctoral students often balance multiple responsibilities, with many maintaining full-time employment as teachers, administrators, or professionals while pursuing their degrees (Onderi, Ajowi, & Malala, 2013). This work-study conflict frequently prolongs completion times, as noted by Wao and Onwuegbuzie (2011) who found that part-time doctoral students typically take longer to complete their programs than full-time counterparts. Financial constraints present another significant barrier, with many students struggling to afford research expenses and tuition fees (Mugendi & Githae, 2021).

The nature of doctoral students themselves presents another dimension of complexity. As Abiddin (2011) observes, doctoral candidates represent a diverse population varying in age, cultural background, work experience, and financial capability. This diversity means students enter programs with different needs, expectations, and challenges. Some face pressure from employers to complete quickly, while others struggle with family obligations or health issues (McCoy & Gadner, 2011). The support systems available to students - particularly from family and institutions - significantly influence their ability to persist (Maher, Ford, & Thompson, 2004).

Against this backdrop, understanding student motivations becomes crucial. Existing research identifies career advancement, personal fulfillment, and societal expectations as primary motivators for doctoral pursuit (Matheka, 2020). Career motivations are particularly strong in Kenya's expanding higher education sector, where PhD qualifications are increasingly required for academic positions and promotions. Personal growth factors also feature prominently, with many students seeking intellectual challenge and self-actualization through doctoral study (Robitschek, 2012). Institutional factors like funding availability and academic support further influence enrollment decisions and persistence.

The Kenyan context presents unique characteristics that warrant investigation. The rapid expansion of higher education institutions has created unprecedented demand for doctoral graduates, yet systemic challenges hinder degree completion. Public and private universities may offer different environments and support structures that influence student experiences. For instance, private institutions often have more resources for student support but may face different regulatory constraints compared to public universities.

This study emerges at a critical juncture for Kenyan higher education. As the country strives to build research capacity and develop a skilled workforce, understanding the factors that motivate and hinder doctoral students becomes essential. By examining motivational factors across institutional types, the research will provide evidence to inform policy decisions and institutional practices aimed at improving doctoral education outcomes. The findings will contribute to both local and global scholarship on doctoral education while offering practical solutions to enhance completion rates in Kenyan universities.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical role of doctoral education in Kenya's knowledge economy, completion rates remain alarmingly low, with only 26% of enrolled students graduating annually (CUE, 2016). While existing studies have identified various challenges affecting doctoral completion, there remains a significant gap in understanding the motivational factors that initially drive students to pursue PhD programs in Kenyan universities. Current literature (Matheka, 2020; Mugendi & Githae, 2021) has primarily focused on completion barriers rather than the complex interplay of motivations that influence enrollment decisions.

The problem this study addresses is the lack of comprehensive research examining how different motivational factors - including career advancement, personal fulfillment, and institutional support systems - interact to influence doctoral pursuit among students

in Kenya's public and private universities. While some studies (Onderi, Ajowi, & Malala, 2013; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011) have touched on isolated aspects of doctoral motivation, there is insufficient comparative analysis of how these factors vary between institutional types and student demographics.

Furthermore, existing data fails to adequately capture how motivational factors evolve throughout the doctoral journey or how they relate to eventual completion outcomes. This gap in knowledge hinders universities' ability to develop targeted recruitment strategies and support mechanisms that address students' actual needs and expectations. The study therefore seeks to systematically investigate the key motivational factors influencing doctoral degree pursuit across different university contexts in Kenya, providing evidence to enhance both student recruitment and retention strategies.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes crucial knowledge about doctoral-level academic persistence in Kenyan universities. By examining motivational factors influencing PhD pursuit, the study provides insights into why students enroll and persist in doctoral programs despite challenges. The findings will benefit multiple stakeholders: graduate students can better plan their academic journeys, faculty members will gain tools to support doctoral candidates, and institutions can develop targeted retention strategies. Particularly for Kenya's expanding higher education sector, understanding these motivational factors is essential for improving completion rates and meeting the nation's demand for highly qualified professionals.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focuses specifically on doctoral students in the Faculty of Education across Kenyan public and private universities. It examines institutions with at least 10 years of experience offering doctoral programs, analyzing enrollment and completion data from 2011-2016. This timeframe provides sufficient data to identify patterns in doctoral persistence while maintaining focus on Kenya's unique educational context. The research concentrates on motivational factors rather than other potential barriers to completion.

Theoretical Framework: Self-Determination Theory

The study employs Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) to analyze doctoral motivation. SDT's focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation aligns perfectly with understanding why students pursue PhDs. The theory's three core needs - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - provide a lens to examine how different motivational factors influence persistence. For instance, career advancement (extrinsic motivation) and personal fulfillment (intrinsic motivation) represent different points on SDT's motivation continuum. The theory helps explain how institutional support systems can nurture students' basic psychological needs to enhance persistence.

Review of Literature

The decision to pursue a doctoral degree is influenced by a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. In Kenya, where higher education has expanded significantly in recent decades, understanding what drives students to undertake and persist in doctoral studies is crucial for improving completion rates. This literature review examines theoretical perspectives and empirical studies on motivational factors affecting doctoral students, with particular attention to the Kenyan context. The review is structured around key themes: theoretical foundations, personal motivational factors, institutional influences, and socio-cultural considerations.

Several theoretical frameworks provide insight into the motivational dynamics of doctoral education. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) posits that intrinsic motivation—driven by autonomy, competence, and relatedness—enhances persistence. In Kenya, doctoral students often cite personal growth and intellectual curiosity as primary motivators, aligning with SDT's emphasis on intrinsic rewards (Muthuswamy et al., 2017).

Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) suggests that students weigh the expected benefits of a doctorate against the costs. Kenyan students frequently pursue doctoral degrees for career advancement, particularly in academia and leadership roles, indicating that perceived value strongly influences their decision-making (Rong'uno, 2016).

Tinto's (1993) Doctoral Persistence Theory highlights academic and social integration as critical for completion. In Kenyan universities, students who establish strong relationships with supervisors and peers demonstrate higher motivation levels, supporting Tinto's assertion that institutional belonging fosters persistence (Obura, 2016).

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Career Advancement emerges as a dominant motivator across studies. In Kenya, where academic qualifications significantly influence career progression, many doctoral students view the degree as essential for professional mobility (Matheka et al., 2020). For instance, lecturers in public universities often pursue doctorates to meet Commission for University Education (CUE) requirements for promotion.

Intellectual Curiosity and Passion for Research also play pivotal roles. Students who express genuine interest in their research topics exhibit higher resilience during challenges (Kerrigan & Hayes, 2016). However, in Kenya, where doctoral programs often emphasize coursework over research early on, some students struggle to maintain motivation if their research passions are not nurtured (Kabeba, 2015).

Personal Growth Initiative (PGI)—defined as proactive engagement in self-development—correlates strongly with doctoral persistence. Sharma and Rani (2018) found that students with high PGI set clearer goals and seek feedback more actively. Kenyan doctoral students who participate in workshops on research skills and time management often report enhanced motivation (Iddrus, 2017).

Supervision Quality is a critical factor. Effective supervisors provide timely feedback, mentorship, and emotional support, all of which enhance student motivation (Knox et al., 2019). In Kenyan public universities, where supervisor workloads are heavy, students frequently cite delayed feedback as a demotivating factor (Ndayambaye, 2018). Conversely, private universities with structured supervision models, such as regular progress meetings, report higher student satisfaction (Roumell & Bolliger, 2017).

Financial Support significantly impacts motivation. Many Kenyan doctoral students face financial constraints, particularly in public universities where funding is limited (Rong'uno, 2016). Those who secure scholarships or employer sponsorship exhibit higher persistence rates, underscoring the link between financial stability and motivation (Matheka et al., 2020).

Program Structure also matters. Programs that balance coursework and research early on help students build confidence. In Kenya, some institutions have adopted modular programs allowing working professionals to study part-time, which enhances accessibility and motivation (Obura, 2016).

Family and Community Expectations can either motivate or pressure students. In Kenya, familial pride often drives doctoral pursuit, but conflicting responsibilities (e.g., work, childcare) may hinder progress (Iddrus, 2017). Female students, in particular, face cultural expectations that sometimes delay their studies (Wamala et al., 2018).

Gender Dynamics influence motivational pathways. While male students often cite career advancement as their primary motivator, female students additionally emphasize personal fulfillment and breaking societal barriers (Castro et al., 2016). Kenyan universities are increasingly implementing gender-sensitive policies, such as childcare support, to enhance female student motivation (Wamala et al., 2018).

Gaps in the Literature

While existing studies provide valuable insights, gaps remain. First, most research on doctoral motivation derives from Western contexts, limiting its applicability to Kenya's unique socio-economic landscape. Second, comparative studies between public and private universities are scarce, yet these sectors differ markedly in resources and student demographics. Finally, the role of emerging technologies (e.g., online learning platforms) in sustaining motivation warrants exploration, especially post-COVID-19.

Motivational factors in doctoral education are multifaceted, encompassing personal aspirations, institutional support, and socio-cultural influences. In Kenya, addressing challenges such as financial constraints, supervisor workload, and gender disparities could significantly enhance student motivation. Future research should explore culturally tailored interventions, such as peer mentorship programs and flexible funding models, to support doctoral candidates across diverse institutional settings. By aligning institutional practices with student motivations, Kenyan universities can improve both enrollment and completion rates in doctoral programs.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research study required the researcher to implement the mixed methods research paradigm for its actualization. This research used the convergent parallel research design as its specific methodology. The researcher uses concurrent timing to execute quantitative and qualitative strands simultaneously as part of the same research phase through this research design. The researcher maintains equal importance between methods and conducts analysis on independent strands (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The researcher combines results from the qualitative and quantitative strands during interpretation. The research design employs convergent parallel mixed methods to unify the different advantages and drawbacks of quantitative and qualitative methods.

The researcher chose the convergent parallel mixed methods research design because of the following essential reasons. The research design enabled the same field visit to obtain two datasets. The researcher prepared for such an eventuality because they knew research demands sometimes limited time and funding availability. The researcher viewed the equally important value of obtaining and analyzing both datasets for handling the assigned problem. Due to research experience in both qualitative and quantitative fields the researcher did not anticipate substantial obstacles from combining them in a study. The successful combination of both quantitative and qualitative research elements provides an extensive understanding of the investigated problem.

Target Population

All doctoral students in education faculties along with deans of education faculty and their faculty members from both public and private universities throughout Kenya make up the research targets. The research questions needed complete answers from these three target groups which played an essential role.

The doctoral students included in the study groups enabled the researcher to obtain vital answers about doctoral degree completion. Through the doctoral student the researcher gained knowledge about doctoral duration and completion procedures. This research allowed the researcher to evaluate the relationships between academic persistence determinants in addition to their impact on doctoral degree completion duration.

Among the participants in this research the doctoral dissertation supervisor occupies a vital position. The development process of doctoral dissertations relies heavily on the direct supervision between doctoral students and their supervisors. The doctoral supervisor enabled the researcher to comprehend both ends of the supervisor-supervisee relationship. The doctoral supervisor offered support for understanding PGI and resilience when researchers investigated reasons behind doctorate completion delays. Through consultations with the doctoral supervisor the researcher gained critical insights regarding the available support structures which would aid them and their student to finish their doctoral degree in a timely manner.

The dean of faculty selected as a study participant because their responsibility includes daily operations at the education faculty. The dean of faculty provided the researcher with vital understanding about different elements of doctoral studies within the university. Completion of doctoral degrees stood out as both the dean of faculty's and doctoral students' main concerns. This research perspective included data obtained from both doctoral students and their appointed supervisors. Information from the dean of faculty allowed the researcher to comprehend both the doctoral program difficulties and sustaining support structures within the university toward doctoral completion.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure
Description of Sampling Procedure

Within this section, a description is provided of the processes that the researcher used in order to choose the individuals who would take part in the study. The selection was carried out inside the academic institutions that were responsible for the research. This was then followed by the process for selecting the dissertation supervisors at the universities that were chosen. The researcher then proceeded to discuss the sample technique for the deans of faculty, and then concluded by describing it for the PhD students.

Sampling of Universities

The researcher used criterion sampling to determine the universities that would be part of the research study. Criterion sampling involved the researcher setting a criterion and picking out those cases that fit the criteria set (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The criteria that were set to select the universities was that the university must have been offering a doctoral degree in education for not less than ten years. This period is important because the researcher believed that the time period is adequate for the

universities to have established the doctoral programme and would hopefully provide the nature of information the researcher needed to be able to answer questions related to this study.

The Commission for University Education (CUE) report of November 2017 details the chattered private and public universities in Kenya. According to the report, there are 23 chartered public universities and 19 private universities. The report further documents the programmes each institution is licensed to offer and when they were first offered. Based on the criteria set, there are five public universities in Kenya that fit into the criteria of having offered the doctoral degree in education for at least 10 years. These are: University of Nairobi, Moi University, Kenyatta University, Egerton University and Maseno University. Among the private universities, only two meet the criteria. These are: Catholic University of Eastern Africa and University of East Africa Baraton. Therefore, the researcher included the seven universities in the research study.

Sampling of doctoral students in the Faculty of Education

The selection of doctoral students was done through stratified and systematic sampling procedure. With the necessary authorization, the researcher approached the faculty of education in the selected universities for the list of students enrolled into the PhD programme between the year 2011and 2016, the period the researcher was interested in. The researcher was interested in this period of ten years as it was possible to establish a trend as far as time of completion of the doctorate degree is concerned. Through the acquired list, the researcher then categorized the students into two subsets based on gender. The gender factor was important in this study as it helped to focus on completion as far as gender is concerned. Each of these subsets was then sampled through systematic random sampling to establish a representative sample. This sampling technique was used to sample doctoral students in all the universities under study. To establish a representative sample, the researcher was guided by sampling table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) in Appendix A the final sample summary is as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Sample of the doctoral students

Institution	PhD (Faculty of Education) admissions (2011 - 2016) (N)	Sample size (s)
University of Nairobi	222	140
Moi University	140	103
Kenyatta University	280	162
Egerton University	130	97
Maseno University	176	123
Catholic University of Eastern Africa	123	97
Total	**1, 071**	**722**

As indicated in Table 2 the population of doctoral students enrolled in the universities under study between the year 2011 and 2016 was 1, 071. The sample size was 722 doctoral students as established through Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table on establishing a representative sample, based on the population on each of the universities studied.

Sampling of the Deans of Faculty

The researcher also used purposive sampling to collect data from the faculty of education deans at the institutions that were sampled. This was done in order to triangulate the data that was collected from the doctorate students. More specifically, the researcher used a sort of purposive sampling known as expert sampling. Due to the fact that they held a position of authority, they were in a position to provide pertinent information on the percentage of PhD students who successfully completed their degrees as well as the estimated average amount of time their doctoral students need to finish their degrees. In light of this, the researcher was tasked with conducting interviews with six deans of faculty from each of the six universities, as shown in table 2.

Sampling of Lectures in the Faculty of Education

To obtain a representative sample of the faculty members in the PhD programme in the selected universities, the researcher used systematic random sampling. With the necessary authorization, the researcher obtained a list of the faculty members who taught the doctoral students from the selected universities. The researcher also targeted the faculty member who supervised the doctoral dissertations as they were resourceful in shedding light on the dissertation supervisory relationship.

The total number of faculty member was divided by the desired sample. The appropriate sample size for the population was generated from the sampling table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) in Appendix A. The division generated a number which was in this case be the Kth element. The researcher then selected a random number smaller than the Kth element. Starting from the randomly selected number, the researcher then selects every K^{th} number from the list of the faculty members. This was done for each of the universities under study.

Description of Data Collection Instruments

This study selected doctoral students along with faculty members and deans of faculty of education from selected universities to be its target groups. The researcher developed separate data collection instruments for every target group. The researcher developed specialized tools which matched each target demographic to acquire the needed data to answer study research questions. Three research tools were developed by the researcher: questionnaires for doctoral students and interview guides for faculty members alongside deans of faculty. The research study utilized a document analysis guide to evaluate the doctoral student enrollment and graduation statistics for determining Kenyan university doctoral degree completion rates.

Description of Data Collection Procedure

Prior to engagement in collection of any data, the researcher sort clearance from the department of Postgraduate Studies in Education (PGSE) at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Using the clearance as basis the researcher made an application for research permission to the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The research permit was shown to County Commissioners and County Education Officers throughout the data collection areas.

The researcher assembled information from doctoral candidates and deans of faculty together with faculty members as their participants. The researcher implemented appropriate sampling approaches to reach conclusions about what sample should be used. The participants needed to give their permission to join this research study before the researchers carried out data collection. Because most doctoral students were not physically present in the academic campuses the researcher decided to distribute surveys through email. The researcher planned telephone sessions for both faculty members and deans of faculty who belonged to the selected universities. After recording the interviews by consent the researcher-transcribed them for analytical purposes.

To carry out document analysis the researcher visited the university registry section of the selected universities. The researcher sort consent from the relevant authority in the registry and requested to collect data from the doctoral students' admission registers as well as the graduation registers. The researcher then recorded the information in the pre-prepared document analysis guides (appendices E & F).

Description of the Data Analysis Procedure

The research approach for analyzing this study utilized mixed methods because the investigator applied a mixed methods research design. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data occurred because the study applied a mixed methods approach. The researcher needed to perform individual analyses for these two data collections. An evaluation of the quantitative data occurred through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. The analysis of qualitative data depended on the research questions to interpret the generated data. Analysis followed each research question uniquely and therefore the researcher gave extensive clarification for each question. The researcher conducted dedicated analysis on quantitative data based on the research questions that created quantitative feedback outputs.

The researcher utilized Question 1 to understand doctoral students through variables which were fundamental for their investigation. The researcher gained information about doctoral students' gender, age and employment status and marital status and studying methods through questionnaire responses. The researcher examined these variables one at a time. Each variable was examined with descriptive statistical practices by the researcher. The statistical information about the variables got presented utilizing frequencies and percentages.

The second research inquiry focused on examining doctoral program completion periods in both public and private higher learning institutions operating in Kenya. The researcher aimed to understand the particular information regarding the duration in years which doctoral students needed to finish their program. The researcher obtained data through student questionnaires combined with interviews of dissertation supervisors and the dean of faculty at education institutions. The researcher conducted descriptive statistical analysis of student data by determining the average program length expressed in years. The analysis helped the researcher to establish completion speeds through measurements of time. The researcher confirmed findings by connecting

them to interview data which received thematic analysis. The researchers used interview transcription followed by coding before searching for patterns before deriving themes from the data.

The third research question arranged information about factors driving doctoral students to achieve their doctoral completion. Thirteen statements summarizing the main factors which motivated doctoral students to finish their degrees were presented to the sampled students in the item. The students answered the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) to provide this information. The researcher identified the principal motivations behind doctoral student doctoral degree completion through the analysis of descriptive statistics which used frequencies and percentages.

The fourth research question explored the graduate student dissertation mentor relationship characteristics. For answering this question, the researcher obtained details from the doctoral student and their dissertation supervisor. The research instrument employed a 14-statement Likert type questionnaire which measured both positive and negative items from doctoral students. The positive survey statements carried ratings between 1 and 5 where 5 showed strong student agreement and 1 displayed strong student disagreement. The negative statement received a reverse scoring methodology. The gathered scores received statistical evaluation as numerical values at this measurement level. The researcher calculated mean scores together with standard deviations by using descriptive statistics methods.

Statistics to determine Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) levels of doctoral students were calculated for research question five data analysis. The 9 statements were presented to doctoral students through a Likert-type scale system. The statements were evaluated by the researcher using a rating system from 1 to 6 where 1 showed full disagreement and 6 showed full agreement to the statement. The complete combined scores obtained from all statements were utilized to evaluate PGI levels among students. The level of PGI directly increases in proportion to summative score values. The researcher calculated the PGI scores' average level for doctoral students through means and standard deviation statistics.

The sixth research question evaluated doctoral student competence in research activities. A multiple-choice exam with twenty questions was given to the doctoral student. The testing questions concentrated on four aspects which deal with research elements including research planning as well as methodology and data collection techniques alongside report writing analysis. The complete score count determined the overall student understanding of research study procedures. The test items permitted the researcher to determine the total score the doctoral student received according to a scale which demonstrated increased knowledge of research study conduct. The researcher obtained item discrimination indices to separate high performing from lower performing students. The researcher derived an overall average score from descriptive statistics calculations which served as the research knowledge measurement for all students.

The researcher needed to determine resilience levels of doctoral students through the seventh research question. Students responded to 30 statements in the student questionnaire through Likert type items to determine their resilience level. The questionnaire used a scale of 1 to 5 for positive statements where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. The questionnaire employed the positive statements with the scale system but used a reversed score for negative statements. The researcher calculated total scores for each student that became the main measure for resilience assessment. Using descriptive statistics, the investigator calculated what became the average resilience score of doctoral students.

Reliability Coefficient of Students Questionnaire

Construct measured	Number of items	Reliability coefficient
Students' demographic characteristics	5	0.773
Motivations towards a doctoral degree	15	0.766
Doctoral dissertation supervisory relationship	14	0.849
Personal Growth Initiative (PGI)	9	0.724
Level of Resilience	30	0.803

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the motivational factors influencing doctoral students' pursuit of PhD degrees in Kenyan universities. Understanding these motivations is crucial for improving doctoral completion rates, which currently stand at only 11-16% within the stipulated four-year period (CUE, 2019). The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data from 307 doctoral students with interviews from faculty members.

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Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study population comprised doctoral students from both public and private universities in Kenya. As shown in Table 1, the sample was nearly gender-balanced (48.9% male, 51.1% female), with most respondents aged 40-44 years (45%). The majority were married (84.4%) and employed full-time (69.7%), studying part-time (61.6%) or on weekends (30.3%).

Motivation for pursuit of a doctoral degree

Item	1 DCAA		2 CS		3 CMW		4 CW		5 CE	
	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. For the satisfaction I feel when I surpass myself in my learning activities	-	-	20	6.5	153	49.8	73	23.8	61	19.9
2. For the satisfaction I have in facing challenges in my studies	12	3.9	53	17.3	152	49.5	78	25.4	12	3.9
3. For the pleasure I feel in accomplishing my studies	-	-	90	29.3	97	31.6	99	32.2	21	6.8
4. Because doctoral studies are consistent with my values	-	-	55	17.9	132	43.0	64	20.8	56	18.2
5. Because my doctoral studies are a fundamental part of who I am and my identity	-	-	39	12.7	83	27.0	111	36.2	74	24.1
6. Because my doctoral studies meet my goals and my objectives in life	-	-	117	38.1	147	47.9	34	11.1	9	2.9
7. Because I want to improve my skills in my field of study	-	-	-	-	11	3.6	106	34.5	190	61.9
8. Because it is important for me to advance knowledge in my field of study	-	-	-	-	55	17.9	55	17.9	197	64.2
9. Because I have the opportunity to take my first steps in research while benefitting from supervision	-	-	180	58.6	77	25.1	14	4.6	36	11.7
10. Because my supervisor would be disappointed or angry if I gave up	110	35.8	118	38.4	79	25.7	-	-	-	-
11. Because I have made commitments I must fulfill	-	-	94	30.6	104	33.9	94	30.6	15	4.9
12. Because I do not want to be perceived a quitter	10	3.3	-	-	88	28.7	146	47.6	63	20.5
13. For the prestige associated with a PhD	49	16.0	32	10.4	26	8.5	131	42.7	69	22.5
14. To find a job with good working conditions	-	-	-	-	17	5.5	103	33.6	187	60.9
15. To get a better paying job after graduation	-	-	-	-	50	16.4	141	45.9	116	37.8

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A.M.E.C.E.A

Consecrate them in the Truth

Supervisor – Supervisee Relationship

The researcher used the third research question to determine the nature of interactions which developed between doctorate students and dissertation supervisors before examining how these interactions affected doctoral degree completion lengths. The researcher developed 14 items which doctorate students completed to evaluate their doctoral dissertation supervision process. Three hundred seven doctoral students completed the response survey. A table named as table 9 contains the research findings. Some statements presented negative feelings in addition to positive ones based on the data displayed in the table. The measurement scale employed five levels of the Likert scale for responses. They were asked to state whether they Strongly Disagreed (SD), Disagreed (D), Undecided (U), Agreed (A) or Strongly Agreed (SA) to the statements on their relationship with their supervisor.

Nature of supervisor – supervisee relationship

Items	SD 1		D 2		U 3		A 4		SA 5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. I have the feeling that my supervisor does not like me much.	109	35.5	198	64.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. My supervisor introduces me to professional activities (conferences, submitting articles for journal publication).	-	-	137	44.6	-	-	170	55.4	-	-
3. My supervisor welcomes my input into our discussions.	-	-	67	21.8	-	-	236	76.9	4	1.3
4. My supervisor is available when I need him/her.	-	-	123	40.1	-	-	184	59.9	-	-
5. I feel like my supervisor expects too much from me.	-	-	178	58.0	-	-	129	42.0	-	-
6. My supervisor offers encouragement for my accomplishments.	-	-	6	2.0	-	-	289	94.1	12	3.9
7. Meetings with my supervisor are unproductive.	28	9.1	239	77.9	15	4.9	25	8.1	-	-
8. My supervisor facilitates my professional development.	-	-	154	50.2	-	-	153	49.8	-	-
9. I learn a lot from my supervisor by watching him or her.	21	6.8	188	61.2	11	3.6	87	28.3	-	-
10. I consistently implement suggestions made by my supervisor.	-	-	16	5.2	-	-	270	87.9	21	6.8
11. My supervisor helps me to recognise areas where I can improve.	-	-	-	-	-	-	307	100	-	-
12. I do not want to be like my supervisor.	13	4.2	137	56.4	80	26.1	23	7.5	18	5.9
13. My supervisor helps me to establish a timetable for the tasks of my dissertation.	-	-	128	41.7	-	-	123	54.4	12	3.9
14. The supervisor takes less than three weeks to read the work and give feedback.	83	27.0	209	68.1	-	-	15	4.9	-	-

The first item on the Likert scale asked the students whether they had a feeling that their supervisor did not like them. In response, out of the 307 who responded, 109 (35.5%) strongly disagreed with this statement and 198 (64.5%) disagreed with the statement. This translates to the doctoral student having the feeling that the dissertation supervisor likes them. This fosters a positive relationship between them and the possibility of the doctoral student being free and able to interact positively with their supervisor.

Person Growth Initiative among doctoral students

Statement	DD 1		MD 2		SD 3		SA 4		MA 5		DA 6	
	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%
1. I know how to change specific things that I want to change in my life	-	-	-	-	40	13.0	114	37.1	153	49.8	-	-
2. I can tell when I am ready to make specific changes in myself	-	-	-	-	18	5.9	182	59.3	107	34.9	-	-
3. I have a good sense of where I am headed in my life	-	-	-	-	15	4.9	90	29.3	202	65.8	-	-
4. If I want to change something in my life, I initiate the transition process	-	-	-	-	-	-	88	28.7	191	62.2	28	9.1
5. I can choose the role I want to play in a group	-	-	-	-	-	-	173	56.4	112	36.5	22	7.2
6. I have a specific action plan to help me reach my goals	-	-	-	-	-	-	174	56.7	133	43.3	-	-
7. I take charge of my life	-	-	-	-	-	-	77	25.1	214	69.7	16	5.2
8. I know what my unique contribution to the world might be	-	-	-	-	46	15.0	202	65.8	59	19.2	-	-
9. I have a plan for making my life more balanced	-	-	-	-	-	-	238	77.5	69	22.5	-	-
Average PGI Score	**-**		**-**		**12**		**36**		**45**		**18**	

From the findings, the researcher established that the PGI scores for most of the doctoral students was between 36 and 45. This means that though the PGI level of the doctoral student was moderately high, the researcher noted a greater inclination towards two specific components of PGI; intentional behavior and readiness for change. Specifically, under intentional behavior, majority of the respondents (69.7%) mostly agreed to the statement that they take charge of their lives. Under readiness for change, 65.8 mostly agreed that they have a good sense of where they are headed in their life. Under *planfulness*, 62.2% of the respondents mostly agreed to the statement that if they wanted to change something in their lives, they initiated the process.

With a PGI that is average in nature, the researcher understands that this is likely to affect the level of self – change among the doctoral students. This is because having a high score in PGI translates to greater persistence and also a higher willingness to find opportunities for self – growth. This is as pointed out by Sharma and Rani (2018), who said that there is a positive relationship between PGI and self – efficacy, therefore promoting higher levels of persistence. Therefore, a student who lacks in the willingness for self – growth is likely to lose the focus on their degree and this is likely to translate in lower academic achievements. This therefore could be a possible reason for delayed and even non completion of the doctoral degree among the doctoral students.

Conclusion
Summary of the study
The research began by providing a summary of the doctoral degree in chapter one. The discussion focuses on the historic evolution of doctorates within the field of education. The research focused on academic persistence factors that affect how long it takes to finish the doctorate degree in education. A detailed presentation of research questions and hypotheses exists within this chapter along with statements of the problem and significance of study and definitions for essential terms used in research. Furthermore, the chapter establishes scope limitations of the study and theoretical concepts.

Two distinct sections make up the second part of the research. The initial part of this section examined existing theories which drive doctoral students to persist. The study analyzed Rendo'n (1994) theory of validation in addition to Tinto's (1993) doctoral theory of persistence and Bean's (1980) theoretical model of student attrition with Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement. The second portion consisted of evaluating research data from both international and local contexts regarding elements that affect doctoral student persistence and doctoral timelines. The research studies received a section-by-section order. Student characteristics alongside supervisor supervisee relationship and Personal Growth Initiative along with student's research knowledge and academic resilience and support structures for doctoral students comprised the investigated factors. The chapter provided a summary of the analyzed research theories in addition to empirical studies. The theoretical along with empirical research gaps received presentation at the conclusion of the chapter.

The third chapter established the research design together with methodology for performing the study. The research design and its justification for application followed by population identification and sampling strategy explanations for all research groups featured in this study appeared in this chapter. A discussion about the selected research instruments took place before data collection. After the discussion about research instrument validity and reliability was finished. This research study had specific ethical provisions which received detailed treatment in the final section of the chapter.

The fourth chapter used the data obtained to support the investigation of the research problem. Researchers presented their findings according to the particular research questions established in this study. The research uses frequency tables and charts as data presentation formats before interpreting the importance of collected results. The article covered findings regarding participant survey response numbers together with participant demographic information and doctoral progress status along with doctoral motivation factors and supervisor connections and PGI assessments and research expertise knowledge levels and doctoral student resilience levels. The research hypothesis underwent a test to analyze the connection between examined factors with doctorate degree completion times while determining its statistical significance.

Status of doctoral degree completion

The researcher evaluated data collection results to demonstrate that doctoral degree completion faced delays. The research results indicated doctoral students took longer to finish their academic programs than the designated four-year duration. The completed doctoral degrees in Kenyan universities were tracked by the researcher and found to vary between 12% and 16% per academic year. The enrollment numbers for doctoral students by universities each year substantially exceeded the number of graduates who obtained doctoral degrees.

Students reported work reasons as part of what caused their time to completion to become delayed. Students experienced challenges while trying to maintain equilibrium between their job responsibilities and their academic endeavor. Family obligations combined with financial challenges served as additional reasons for students to extend their doctoral program completion according to research participants.

Demographic characteristics of doctoral students

The researcher was interested in the gender representation, age, and marital status, nature of employment and mode of study of the doctoral students. In relation to gender the participants were balanced, as 150 (48.9%) were male and 157 (51.1%) were females. In terms of age, majority of the respondents were between 40 – 44years of age. The researcher also observed that a significant number of students pursuing their PhD were married. In terms of employment 214 (69.7%) were in full time employment, 89 (29.0%) in part time employment and 4 (1.3%) were unemployed. Finally, the researcher established that 189 (61.6%) took their study part – time, 25 (8.1%) were in full time studies and 93 (30.3%) undertook their doctoral studies during the weekend.

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