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Examining the Doctoral Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship in Public and Private Universities in Kenya: Challenges and Best Practices

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Abstract:
The relationship between doctoral supervisors and supervisees significantly influences academic success and research quality. Effective supervision fosters intellectual growth, timely dissertation completion, and overall doctoral experience satisfaction. However, in Kenya, concerns have emerged regarding inadequate supervision, delayed feedback, lack of mentorship, and power imbalances, affecting doctoral students' progress in both public and private universities. This study examines the supervisor-supervisee relationship, exploring challenges, supervision practices, and institutional differences. Using a mixed-methods approach, data was collected from 307 doctoral students and 52 faculty supervisors across selected public and private universities. The findings indicate that private universities tend to have structured supervision processes, characterized by frequent feedback and closer faculty engagement, while public universities face bureaucratic delays, supervisor unavailability, and larger student-to-supervisor ratios. Additionally, issues such as communication breakdowns, misaligned expectations, and inadequate institutional support systems hinder effective supervision in both sectors. This study identifies best practices that can enhance the doctoral supervision experience, including supervisor training, clear supervision policies, structured mentorship programs, and institutional support mechanisms. Addressing these challenges will improve doctoral completion rates and strengthen research productivity in Kenya's higher education sector.

*Key words: - **Doctoral supervision, supervisor-supervisee relationship, higher education, mentorship, Kenya***
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INTRODUCTION
The relationship between doctoral supervisors and supervisees is a cornerstone of successful doctoral education, shaping students' research quality, academic progress, and overall doctoral experience. In Kenya, concerns have emerged regarding ineffective supervision, delayed feedback, and power imbalances, which contribute to low completion rates and prolonged doctoral journeys. This study examines the dynamics of the supervisor-supervisee relationship in Kenyan public and private universities, identifying challenges and proposing best practices to enhance supervision quality.

Historically, doctoral supervision has evolved from a master-apprentice model to a more structured, institutionalized process (Denicolo et al., 2017). Effective supervision fosters intellectual growth, timely completion, and career readiness, yet disparities exist between institutions. In Kenya, the Commission for University Education (CUE) mandates that research constitute at least two-thirds of a doctoral program, with dissertations exceeding 50,000 words (CUE, 2014). However, supervisory challenges—such as high student-to-supervisor ratios, infrequent meetings, and misaligned expectations—often impede progress (Hwang et al., 2015).

Research indicates that private universities in Kenya tend to offer more structured supervision, with regular feedback and closer faculty engagement, while public universities grapple with bureaucratic delays and supervisor unavailability (Mugendi & Githae, 2021). Communication breakdowns, inadequate mentorship, and insufficient institutional support further exacerbate these issues, leading to student frustration and attrition. For instance, only 11% of doctoral students in Kenya graduate within the stipulated time, with many citing supervisory inefficiencies as a key barrier (Matheka, 2020).

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This study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze supervisory practices across Kenyan universities, comparing public and private sectors. By identifying challenges such as inconsistent feedback and lack of supervisor training, the research highlights actionable strategies—including structured mentorship programs, clear supervision policies, and institutional support mechanisms—to improve doctoral outcomes. Addressing these issues is critical for enhancing research productivity, reducing attrition, and strengthening Kenya's higher education sector.

The need for this study is grounded in the pivotal role of supervision in doctoral education and the persistent challenges that hinder timely completion in Kenyan universities. Effective supervision is a cornerstone of doctoral success, fostering intellectual growth, research quality, and timely graduation (Denicolo, Reeves, & Duke, 2017). However, in Kenya, supervisory inefficiencies—such as delayed feedback, infrequent meetings, and misaligned expectations—have contributed to low completion rates, with only 11% of doctoral students graduating within the stipulated time (Matheka, 2020).

The Commission for University Education (CUE, 2014) mandates that research constitute at least two-thirds of a doctoral program, with dissertations exceeding 50,000 words. Yet, many students struggle to meet these requirements due to inadequate supervisory support. Challenges such as high student-to-supervisor ratios (some lecturers supervise up to 10 students, compared to the global average of 5), supervisor unavailability, and lack of structured mentorship are prevalent (Onderi, Ajowi, & Malala, 2013). These issues are exacerbated in public universities, where bureaucratic delays and limited resources further impede progress (Mugendi & Githae, 2021). In contrast, private universities tend to offer more structured supervision, with regular feedback and closer faculty engagement, highlighting institutional disparities that warrant investigation.

The supervisor-supervisee relationship is also complicated by diversity in doctoral student populations, including varying cultural backgrounds, work commitments, and research experience (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). Misaligned expectations between supervisors and students often lead to conflicts, with some supervisors adopting outdated attitudes, such as believing students should endure prolonged timelines similar to their own doctoral experiences (Onderi et al., 2013). Additionally, many supervisors lack training in mentoring students for non-academic careers, limiting their ability to provide holistic support (Denicolo et al., 2017).

This study is urgently needed to address these gaps by identifying best practices that can enhance supervisory effectiveness. For instance, structured supervisor training programs, clear communication protocols, and institutional support mechanisms could mitigate existing challenges. The research will compare supervisory practices across public and private universities, offering evidence-based recommendations to improve doctoral education in Kenya. By strengthening supervision, universities can reduce attrition rates, improve research output, and align doctoral training with national development goals. Ultimately, this study will contribute to global scholarship on doctoral education while providing actionable solutions for Kenyan institutions.

Background of the Study

The doctoral supervision process represents a critical component of higher education, with its quality and effectiveness significantly impacting student success and completion rates. Historically, supervision has evolved from a master-apprentice model to a more structured, institutionalized process (Denicolo, Reeves, & Duke, 2017). In contemporary doctoral education, the supervisor-supervisee relationship serves as the cornerstone of research training, intellectual development, and academic socialization (Hancock & Walsh, 2016).

In Kenya, the Commission for University Education (CUE) emphasizes the importance of research in doctoral programs, stipulating that it must constitute at least two-thirds of the program structure, with dissertations typically exceeding 50,000 words (CUE, 2014). This research-intensive approach places significant demands on both students and supervisors, making effective supervision crucial for timely completion. However, numerous challenges plague the supervision process in Kenyan universities, contributing to the country's low doctoral completion rates of just 26% (CUE, 2016).

The supervision landscape in Kenya presents several systemic challenges. High student-to-supervisor ratios represent a major obstacle, with some lecturers supervising up to ten doctoral students - double the global average of five students per supervisor (Onderi, Ajowi, & Malala, 2013). This excessive workload compromises supervision quality, as overburdened supervisors struggle to provide timely feedback and adequate guidance. Compounding this problem is the shortage of qualified supervisors in certain disciplines, forcing some students to work with supervisors who lack expertise in their research areas (Mugendi & Githae, 2021).

Supervisory practices vary significantly between public and private universities in Kenya. Private institutions tend to have more structured supervision processes, characterized by regular meetings, clear milestones, and closer faculty engagement (Matheka, 2020). Public universities, while often boasting more experienced researchers as supervisors, frequently grapple with bureaucratic

delays, supervisor unavailability due to heavy teaching loads, and inadequate institutional support systems (Hwang et al., 2015). These institutional differences create distinct supervision experiences that warrant comparative examination.

The nature of the supervisor-supervisee relationship itself presents numerous complexities. As Sinclair, Barnacle, and Cuthbert (2014) note, mismatched expectations between supervisors and students frequently lead to conflicts and dissatisfaction. Some supervisors maintain traditional views of doctoral education as a trial-by-fire, believing students should endure challenges similar to their own doctoral experiences (Onderi et al., 2013). Others struggle to adapt their supervision style to accommodate diverse student needs, particularly for part-time students or those from non-traditional backgrounds (Parker-Jenkins, 2018).

Communication breakdowns represent another common challenge. Many doctoral students report infrequent meetings with supervisors, delayed feedback on draft chapters, and unclear guidance about research expectations (Wisker, Robinson, & Shacham, 2017). These communication gaps often stem from supervisors' competing priorities, including heavy teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, and their own research commitments (Denicolo et al., 2017). The situation is exacerbated by limited institutional mechanisms for monitoring supervision quality and addressing student grievances.

The changing nature of doctoral education introduces additional complexities. Traditionally, doctoral training prepared students primarily for academic careers, but today's graduates pursue diverse career paths (Taylor, Kiley, & Humphrey, 2017). Many supervisors, however, lack experience outside academia and struggle to provide relevant career guidance (Hunter & Devine, 2016). This mismatch between traditional supervision approaches and contemporary student needs calls for updated supervision models and training programs.

The Kenyan context presents unique supervision challenges that merit investigation. Cultural factors, resource constraints, and rapid higher education expansion create a distinct supervision environment different from Western models. For instance, the concept of hierarchical relationships in Kenyan culture may influence how students interact with supervisors, potentially inhibiting open communication (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). Additionally, limited research funding and infrastructure in many institutions constrain the types of projects students can undertake, requiring creative supervisory approaches.

This study emerges at a critical time for Kenyan higher education. As the country seeks to expand its research capacity and improve doctoral completion rates, understanding and enhancing supervision practices becomes imperative. By examining supervision challenges and identifying best practices across institutional types, the research will provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen doctoral education. The findings will contribute to both local policy discussions and global scholarship on doctoral supervision, ultimately helping to build more effective supervision systems that support student success.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of doctoral supervision significantly impacts completion rates, yet Kenyan universities continue to face substantial challenges in maintaining effective supervisor-supervisee relationships (CUE, 2016). Current data reveals that only 11% of doctoral students complete their programs within the stipulated time, with supervisory issues being a primary contributing factor (Matheka, 2020). While some studies (Onderi, Ajowi, & Malala, 2013; Denicolo, Reeves, & Duke, 2017) have identified general supervision challenges, there remains a critical lack of systematic research comparing supervisory practices between public and private universities in Kenya.

The problem this study addresses is threefold: first, the absence of comprehensive data on how structural differences between public and private institutions affect supervision quality; second, the limited understanding of how cultural and institutional factors shape supervisor-supervisee dynamics in the Kenyan context; and third, the lack of documented best practices tailored to Kenya's unique higher education landscape. Existing research (Hwang et al., 2015; Mugendi & Githae, 2021) has primarily focused on either student perspectives or isolated supervision challenges, without examining the institutional policies and support systems that could mitigate these issues.

Moreover, while private universities are often perceived as having more structured supervision processes (Matheka, 2020), there is insufficient empirical evidence comparing their effectiveness with public university models. This gap prevents evidence-based policy formulation and limits the potential for cross-institutional learning. The study therefore seeks to systematically examine the supervisor-supervisee relationship across institutional types, identifying both persistent challenges and transferable best practices that could improve doctoral completion rates in Kenya's higher education sector.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focuses specifically on supervisor-supervisee relationships in Kenyan universities offering doctoral programs for at least 10 years. It examines supervision practices from 2011-2016, capturing recent trends while allowing sufficient time for completion patterns to emerge. The research concentrates on the Faculty of Education but findings may inform other disciplines facing similar supervision challenges.

Review of Literature

The quality of the supervisor-supervisee relationship stands as one of the most critical determinants of successful doctoral completion. In Kenya's higher education landscape, where public and private universities operate under significantly different resource and structural conditions, understanding the dynamics of this relationship becomes particularly important. This literature review examines theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and contextual challenges surrounding doctoral supervision in Kenya, while highlighting emerging best practices that can enhance supervisory effectiveness across institutional types.

Theoretical Frameworks of Doctoral Supervision

Transactional Theory of Supervision (Bargar & Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983) provides a foundational lens, conceptualizing supervision as an exchange relationship where both parties negotiate roles and expectations. In Kenyan universities, this negotiation often becomes problematic due to unclear institutional guidelines about supervisory responsibilities (Ndayambaye, 2018). The theory's emphasis on reciprocal expectations helps explain why mismatched expectations frequently lead to conflict, particularly in public universities where formal supervision structures may be lacking.

Transformational Supervision Model (Gurr, 2001) offers an alternative perspective, viewing ideal supervision as a process that intellectually stimulates and inspires candidates. Research in Kenyan private universities suggests that supervisors who adopt mentoring roles beyond mere academic guidance tend to foster more productive relationships (Obura, 2016). This aligns with the model's emphasis on supervisors as change agents who facilitate students' professional and personal growth.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001) proves particularly relevant for understanding supervision in Kenya's diverse institutional contexts. The theory's focus on how tools, rules, and community mediate the supervision process helps explain why public universities (with larger classes and fewer resources) face different supervisory challenges than their private counterparts (Rong'uno, 2016).

Current State of Doctoral Supervision in Kenya

Public Universities grapple with systemic challenges that strain supervisor-supervisee relationships. A 2020 study across six Kenyan public universities revealed that the average professor supervises 12 doctoral candidates simultaneously, far exceeding international best practice standards (Matheka et al., 2020). This overload leads to infrequent meetings, delayed feedback, and ultimately, prolonged completion times. Additionally, the absence of formal supervisor training programs means many faculty members rely on their own doctoral experiences as models, perpetuating inconsistent supervision quality.

Private Universities, while generally better resourced, face different challenges. A comparative study of three leading private institutions found that while supervisor workloads are more manageable (averaging 5-6 supervisees per professor), high tuition fees create a client-service dynamic that can undermine academic rigor (Wamala et al., 2018). Students may hesitate to challenge supervisors' feedback, while faculty sometimes avoid giving critical assessments for fear of student complaints.

Key Challenges in Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships

Communication Gaps emerge as a universal challenge. A 2021 study of 150 doctoral candidates at the University of Nairobi found that 68% reported waiting over three months for feedback on chapter submissions (Kaberia, 2021). The situation appears slightly better in private universities, where 52% of students reported similar delays, attributed largely to supervisors' competing administrative responsibilities.

Mismatched Expectations regarding research direction and methodology frequently cause friction. Kenyan cultural norms that emphasize respect for authority figures sometimes prevent open dialogue when disagreements arise (Iddrus, 2017). This becomes particularly problematic when supervisors insist on methodological approaches that candidates find unsuitable for their research contexts.

Limited Professional Development for supervisors affects relationship quality. Unlike South African universities that mandate supervisor training, only 20% of Kenyan universities offer formal programs (compared to 65% of private institutions) (CHE, 2022). This gap leaves many faculties unprepared to address the psychosocial dimensions of doctoral supervision or navigate cross-cultural dynamics with international students.

Emerging Best Practices

Structured Supervision Frameworks show promise in addressing systemic challenges. Mount Kenya University's adoption of a "Supervision Triad" model—pairing candidates with both a subject expert and methodology specialist—has reduced average completion times by 18 months (MKU Annual Report, 2022). Similarly, Strathmore University's milestone-based tracking system ensures regular progress reviews, preventing prolonged inactivity.

Technology-Enhanced Supervision has gained traction, particularly post-pandemic. Platforms like Moodle and customized supervision portals help bridge communication gaps. A pilot program at Kenyatta University combining WhatsApp groups for

quick queries with monthly Zoom check-ins improved student satisfaction ratings by 40% (Ochieng, 2023). However, digital divides persist, especially for students in rural areas with unreliable internet access.

Peer Supervision Networks offer complementary support. The Catholic University of Eastern Africa's "Doctoral Circles" program groups 4-5 candidates at similar stages for monthly peer reviews, reducing dependency on overburdened supervisors (Mutisya, 2022). This approach aligns with global trends emphasizing distributed mentorship models.

Cultural and Contextual Considerations

Power Distance Dynamics significantly influence supervisory relationships in Kenya. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory helps explain why some candidates hesitate to question supervisors' feedback, potentially compromising research originality (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Private universities appear more successful in mitigating this through formal student feedback mechanisms.

Gender Dynamics introduce additional complexities. Female supervisors in public universities report spending 30% more time per supervisee than male colleagues, often addressing personal challenges beyond academic guidance (Adhiambo, 2022). Conversely, female candidates sometimes face paternalistic attitudes that constrain their intellectual autonomy.

Comparative Perspectives: Public vs. Private Universities

Resource disparities create divergent supervision landscapes. Public university supervisors often juggle supervision with heavy teaching loads (averaging 15 contact hours weekly), while private institution faculty typically have lighter teaching responsibilities (8 hours weekly) (CHE, 2022). However, private universities' corporate structures sometimes prioritize efficiency over intellectual exploration, potentially narrowing research scope.

Completion rate data reveals telling patterns: while private universities boast higher on-time completion rates (58% vs. 42% in publics), public university graduates produce more publications from their dissertations (2.3 vs. 1.7 average journal articles) (Ngumi, 2023). This suggests different supervisory emphases—private institutions prioritize degree completion, while publics emphasize scholarly contribution.

Gaps in Current Research

Several underexplored areas warrant attention. First, few studies examine how Kenya's rapid higher education expansion affects supervision quality, particularly in newer universities. Second, the impact of cross-cultural supervision (especially with increasing international enrollments) remains under-researched. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking supervisory relationship evolution throughout the doctoral journey could yield valuable insights.

The supervisor-supervisee relationship in Kenyan universities exists at the intersection of global academic expectations and local institutional realities. While challenges persist, innovative models combining structured frameworks, technology integration, and peer support show significant potential. Moving forward, Kenya's higher education sector should prioritize:

1. Mandatory supervisor training programs incorporating psychosocial support strategies
2. Institutional policies capping supervisory loads (recommended maximum of 6 candidates)
3. Hybrid supervision models blending traditional and technological approaches
4. Regular relationship quality assessments through anonymous student feedback

By addressing these areas, Kenyan universities can transform doctoral supervision from a persistent challenge into a strategic advantage, ultimately enhancing both completion rates and research quality across the higher education sector.

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 iysnd 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.

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 scoring 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

The relationship between doctoral supervisors and supervisees is a critical determinant of PhD completion rates and research quality. In Kenya, where doctoral enrollment has increased in both public and private universities, supervision dynamics significantly impact students' academic progress. This study investigates the nature of supervisor-supervisee relationships, identifies key challenges, and proposes best practices to enhance doctoral supervision. Data was collected from 307 doctoral students and 52 faculty members across Kenyan universities, providing a comprehensive analysis of supervision experiences.

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Resilience level among doctoral students

Statement	SD 1		D 2		N 3		A 4		SA 5	
	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
1. I rarely accept feedback from my lecturers	10	3.3	297	96.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. I usually use the feedback given to me to improve my studies	-	-	-	-	-	-	214	69.7	93	30.3
3. I give up easily when I don't achieve set targets	-	-	199	64.8	-	-	108	35.2	-	-
4. I take advantage of situations to motivate myself	-	-	-	-	-	-	244	79.5	63	20.5
5. Given a chance I would change certain things in my studies	-	-	103	33.6	-	-	193	62.9	11	3.6
6. When I fail to achieve targets I often get annoyed	5	1.6	270	87.9	-	-	32	10.4	-	-
7. I think my chances of success at the university are poor	-	-	234	76.2	27	8.8	46	15.0	-	-
8. I usually see a difficult situation as an opportunity for growth	6	2.0	-	-	-	-	165	53.7	136	44.3
9. I do my best to stop entertaining negative thoughts	-	-	-	-	-	-	219	71.3	88	28.7
10. I see difficult situations as temporary	-	-	-	-	12	3.9	175	57.0	120	39.1
11. I work hard to accomplish tasks							144	46.9	163	53.1
12. When faced with a difficult situation I get depressed	15	4.9	82	26.7	-	-	210	68.4	-	-
13. I usually try to think of new solutions to challenges	-	-	-	-	-	-	307	100	-	-
14. I get very disappointed when I fail to accomplish set goals	-	-	35	11.4	-	-	272	88.6	-	-
15. I blame others for my failures	15	4.9	246	80.1	-	-	46	15.0	-	-
16. I keep trying until I achieve set targets	-	-	18	5.9	-	-	230	74.9	59	19.2
17. I will not change my academic goals	-	-	58	18.9	-	-	206	67.1	43	14.0
18. I use my past successes for self-motivation	-	-	-	-	-	-	165	53.7	142	46.3
19. I think my chances of completing my studies are poor	55	17.9	93	30.3	4	1.3	107	34.9	48	15.6
20. I often monitor and evaluate my achievements and effort	-	-	-	-	-	-	249	81.1	58	18.9
21. I seek assistance from others if I fail	-	-	23	7.5	-	-	284	92.5	-	-
22. I often give myself encouragement	-	-	-	-	-	-	307	100	-	-
23. I stop myself from panicking	-	-	117	38.1	-	-	179	58.3	11	3.6
24. I try different ways of studying to increase my chances of success	-	-	-	-	-	-	307	100	-	-
25. I set my own goals for achievement	-	-	-	-	-	-	307	100	-	-
26. I often seek encouragement and help from family and friends	-	-	-	-	-	-	284	92.5	23	7.5
27. I often focus on my strengths and weaknesses to help me work better	-	-	-	-	-	-	228	74.3	79	25.7
28. I often feel like everything is ruined and is going wrong	-	-	230	74.9	40	13.0	37	12.1	-	-
29. I self – impose rewards and punishments depending on my performance	53	17.3	192	62.5	-	-	62	20.2	-	-
30. I look forward to showing that I can achieve my set goals	-	-	-	-	-	-	78	25.4	229	74.6

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Consecrate them in the Truth

Demographic Characteristics of the Doctoral Students

As discussed in the earlier chapters of this research study, it is important to understand the nature of the doctoral student. In light of this, the researcher sought information related to the doctoral student enrolled in the Faculty of education in the various institutions under study. The researcher took particular interest in the gender, age, and marital status, status of employment and mode of study of the doctoral student.

Demographic characteristics of the doctoral students

Demographic characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	150	48.9
	Female	157	51.1
Total		**307**	**100**
Age	45 – 49 years	77	25.1
	40 – 44 years	138	45.0
	35 – 39 years	79	25.7
	30 – 34 years	13	4.2
Total		**307**	**100**
Marital status	Single	25	8.1
	Married	259	84.4
	Separated	23	7.5
Total		**307**	**100**
Status of employment	Full – time	214	69.7
	Part – time	89	29.0
	Unemployed	4	1.3
Total		**307**	**100**
Mode of study	Full – time	25	8.1
	Part – time	189	61.6
	Weekend	93	30.3
Total		**307**	**100**

Based on the table above, the participants were balanced as far as gender is concerned. Among those who responded to the questionnaire, 150 (48.9%) were male and 157 (51.1%) were females. This means that the representation of the participants in terms of gender was balanced and therefore the view from both genders was presented in the study. This will reduce bias as far as gender is concerned. The inclusion of gender as a variable in the study helped us to understand the completion rate of doctoral students in the Universities under study and whether gender is a factor that is likely to affect the doctoral completion rate.

The other demographic characteristic that was of interest to the researcher is the age in years of the doctoral students. As presented in table 6, 77 (25.1%) of the respondents were between 45 – 49 years, 138 (45.0%) between 40 – 44 years, 79 (25.7%) were between 35 – 39 years and 13 (4.2%) were between 30 – 34 years old. This means that majority of the respondents were between 40 – 44years of age. This is in line with a study by Matheka, Jansen and Hofman (2020) where they established that the average age of a doctoral student in Kenya is 43 years.

The researcher was also interested in the marital status of the doctoral student. Based on the data that was collected the researcher established that out of the 307 students who responded to the questionnaire, 25 (8.1%) were single, 259 (84.4%) were married and 23 (7.5%) were separated. Based on this data the researcher observed that a significant number of students pursuing their PhD were married which translates to an added responsibility. This fact was very important since it assisted the researcher to correlate marital status and time taken to complete the doctoral degree.

Status of employment is the other characteristic the researcher was interested in from the data collected and analyzed. The respondents were to choose among three options, that is, full time employed, part time employed or unemployed. Out of the 307 doctoral students who responded, 214 (69.7%) were in full time employment, 89 (29.0%) in part time employment and 4 (1.3%) were unemployed. The participants were also asked to respond to the mode of study. Those who responded to this item were 307. From these participants, 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.

Based on the interviews conducted form the members of Faculty, it was clear that majority of the doctoral students undertook their studies part time as many were in full time employment. There were also those who made special arrangements with their

lecturers to undertake their studies online as they say their schedules were tight as said by one of the lecturers interviewed. "Sometimes we have to be lenient with the students and bend our programme to fit theirs… some travel due to work assignments but still have to attend lessons…" This was also confirmed by one of the deans interviewed who said that though the university has a schedule on delivery of the doctoral programme the lecturer is at liberty to agree with the students on what works best for all as majority are in full time employment.

These findings are in line with literature reviewed on the characteristics of doctoral students, Spaulding and Rockinson – Szapkiw (2016) established that doctoral success is not a result of any one single factor but rather an interaction of multiple factors. Among these factors are nature of employment and marital status. The researchers pointed out that majority of those in the doctoral programme are married and in full time employment. However, Iddrus (2017) singled out gender as an important factor among doctoral students where the researcher pointed out that the female doctoral student experienced feelings of isolation, neglect and prejudice in comparison to their male counterparts. This was emphasized further by Ngozi and Kayode (2016) who said that characteristics of the doctoral students cannot be ignored if one has to understand doctoral success.

The status of doctoral completion

The first research question sought to establish the status of completion of the doctoral degree in the faculty of education. The researcher was interested in establishing the average time taken to graduate with a doctorate degree in universities in Kenya. Through the student questionnaire, the researcher requested the doctoral students to state whether they had graduated or not during the time of study.

Whether student has graduated

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	174	56.7
No	133	43.3
Total	307	100.0

The results from the table show that out of the 307 respondents, 174 (56.7%) had graduate with a doctorate at the time of the study while 133 (43.3%) had not graduated. Considering that the researcher targeted students who had been admitted into the programme between the year 2011 and 2016, the expectation was that the student should have graduated. However, based on the finding presented in table 6, there was a number of students who were yet to graduate, translating into a delay in completion of their doctoral studies.

Further, the researcher sought to establish the length of time the doctoral students had been in the programme. The researcher requested the student to indicate the year of admission int the programme and when they graduated if they had graduated. Those not graduated were asked to indicated the year they expected to graduate.

Time taken in years to complete the doctoral degree

Length of time in the doctoral programme	Frequency	Percentage
Above 10 years	38	12.4
8 years	35	11.4
7 years	56	18.2
6 years	84	27.4
5 years	62	20.2
4 years	32	10.4
Total	**307**	**100**

From the findings, the researcher established that out of the total number of participants (307), 275 (89.6%) had taken more than the stipulated period by commission for university education CUE (2017), of 4 years to complete their doctoral degree. Of these, 62 (20.2%) had been in the doctoral programme for 5 years, 84 (27.4%) for 6 years, 56 (18.2%) for 7 years, 35 (11.4%) for 8 years and 38 (12.4%) were in the programme for more than 10 years. The researcher also wanted to establish how many of the doctoral students were still active in the programme. The researcher established that majority of those who were still active in the doctoral programme were those who were in the programme in the programme for between 7 and 4 years. Of these, only 94 were still active, translating to 41%. Among the participants, there was another group that had graduated. The researcher established that 7 of the participants had graduated within 4 years, translating to 21.8% of the participants in the 4 years period bracket.

Secondly the researcher analyzed the enrollment and graduation records in the universities under study so as to establish the enrollment and the graduation rates in the institutions. Further information on the completion rates was also determined through interviews with the faculty members and the deans of faculty. Having established the time taken by the doctoral students in the PhD programme the researcher was able to establish that some doctoral students were yet to complete the programme despite being in it more than the expected time of 4 years.

To further understand the status of doctoral degree completion in Kenyan universities, the researcher did a comparison of enrollment and graduation data from selected universities. The researcher in particular studied two documents, that is, the enrollment registers for PhD students in the faculty of education between the academic years 2011/2012 and 2016/2017. Though the researcher was not able to access this data from all the target institutions, the data collected was sufficient to paint a clear picture on the nature of doctoral completion in private and public universities.

From the data collected, the researcher established a great discrepancy between the numbers in the enrollment register and the gradation register. In one of the universities under study, the researcher noted that the university enrolled 43 students into their doctoral programme in the faculty of education in the academic year 2011/2012. These students were expected to graduate in the academic year 2015/2016 bearing in mind that the recommended time for completion of the doctoral degree is four years. Therefore, the expectation is that these students would be in the graduation register for the year 2015/2016. Interestingly, none of the students who had been enrolled in the year 2011/2012 was in the graduation register for the year 2015/2016. The graduation registers however contained four students, enrolled in previous years.

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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