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A STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING RESEARCH COMMITMENT AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Postgraduate studies play an important role in fore-fronting knowledge and in advancing the agenda of innovation with research dedication being a crucial success factor. This paper explores reasons that affect research commitment by postgraduate students in Anambra State, Nigeria, where the academic environment is busy but the systemic constrain is limited. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect and analyse data relating to 200 postgraduate students and 20 supervisors across four tertiary institutions using structured questionnaires and semi structured interviews. Quantitative information was analyzed with descriptive and regression statistics through SPSS whereas qualitative information was done thematically based on NVivo. The results show that intrinsic factors (motivation, self- efficacy) and extrinsic factors (funding, the quality of supervision, institutional support), are significant predictors of research commitment. Commitment is also impaired by contextual issues, such as huge academic loads and scarcity of resources. Some of the strategies proposed by the study include training the supervisors better, programs to support them through peers, and more funds to improve the work of research. These results provide practical knowledge regarding the institutional policy changes and can help advance the discussion about enhancing the postgraduate education in low-resource environment.

Keywords: Research Commitment, Postgraduate Students, Intrinsic Factors, Extrinsic Factors, Mixed-Methods Research

Introduction

Postgraduate education has a significant role to play in developing knowledge, innovation as well as play some roles in nation building. At the core of the success of any postgraduate programs is research commitment, which is the commitment, motivation, and persistence of the students in conducting superior research (Smith & Chen, 2018). The researchers have already concluded that commitment to research is a complex interaction of both intrinsic (motivation and self-efficacy) and extrinsic (funding, quality of supervision, support) factors (Jones et al., 2020). At the global level, the role of these factors has been emphasized in determinations of research results, but their interactions have not been explored well in the context of resource-limited settings, such as in Nigeria, where postgraduate education is subject to specific challenges (Adebayo & Okeke, 2021).

The argument is that Nigeria has a system of higher education that is marked by structural underfunding, construction and infrastructure failures, and uneven oversight that translates into low commitment to research by the

postgraduate students (Okebukola, 2022). Nigerian state of Anambra, which is the epicenter of higher education in the south-east, gives an illustration of such issues despite the presence of thriving academic community. In this region, postgraduate students are likely to suffer the slow progress and low productivity of research, and poor academic quality which can be explained by low financial support, insufficient supervision, significant workload as teachers, and inaccessible research facilities (Eze & Obi, 2023). These concerns not only obstruct personal academic performance but also slow the economy of the country in terms of knowledge and international academic competency.

The identified issue of low research commitment on the part of postgraduate students requires context-specific study to determine its preconditioning factors and suggest applicable measures to mitigate it. Early research works focused on psychological variables such as self-efficacy and goal orientation (Bandura, 1997), whereas the recent literature puts an emphasis on structural (availability of resources and institutional policies) issues (Musa & Ibrahim, 2023). But there is scarce empirical evidence on the interaction of these factors in the Nigerian postgraduate education system and more-so that of Anambra State. This paper will fill this gap by researching on the factors that influence commitment to research among postgraduate students in four tertiary institutions namely Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Federal Polytechnic Oko and Anambra state polytechnic.

The overall aim of the proposed study is to examine the factors that have an impact on research commitment among postgraduate students in Anambra State. In particular, it will determine the role of intrinsic factors (motivation, self-efficacy), the role of extrinsic factors (funding, supervision, institutional support), the role of personal and academic workloads and the strategies that can be offered to improve research commitment. This study can have potential impact in informing the institutional policies, performance of postgraduate research and the development of the country (Nigeria) academically and in development. Presenting the empirical evidence and context-specific suggestions, the paper can enhance the research culture within the Nigerian higher education sphere and contribute to the general debate of the postgraduate education in developing states.

Theoretical Framework

This work is based on the Self-Efficacy Theory of Bandura (1997), where he argues that individuals believe that they are able to perform various albeit tasks that can make them motivated, put effort, and persist. The theory concentrates on four based sources of self-efficacy; mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. Under postgraduate research, self-efficacy determines the commitment of the student in completing their tasks, including research literature review, data analysis, and writing of the thesis (Smith & Chen, 2018). The theory presumes that when people have high-self-efficacy they tend to set difficult goals, do not

give up easily when they encounter a setback, and tend to have better results.

Self-Efficacy Theory will also be applicable in this research since it will help in the comprehension of how intrinsic variables relating to motivation skills and confidence would interact with the extrinsic variables, including supervision and availability of resources to affect research commitment. As an example, high-self-efficacy students can also overcome resource limitations by being persistent; low-self-efficacy students may engage in disengagement when exposed to poor supervision or inadequate funding (Adebayo & Okeke, 2021). The assumptions within the theory are consistent with the study that addresses both psychological and structural determinants of research commitment, and thus this theory provides a strong lucrative angle to understand the interconnection of these factors in a resource-constrained environment such as Anambra State.

Methodology

The set of methods mentioned in this study was both quantitative and qualitative, allowing one to understand thoroughly the factors that influence research commitment. The specific population included the postgraduate students and supervisors in four tertiary institutions in Anambra State i.e., Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Federal Polytechnic Oko, and Anambra State Polytechnic. These institutions are the ones whose staff was chosen based on the variety of academic programs and large number of postgraduate students.

A purposive sampling was applied and a sample size of 200 (50 postgraduate students in each institution and 5 supervisors in each institution). Quantitative data pertaining to intrinsic motivators (motivation, self-efficacy) and extrinsic motivators (funding, supervising, institutional support) were obtained by administering structured questionnaires to students. The questionnaire comprised Likert scale items of validated measures e.g., Research Motivation Scale (Deemer et al., 2010) and the Academic Self-efficacy Scale (Zimmerman, 2000). Supervisors were interviewed using a semi-structured interview in order to understand the qualitative aspects of institutional and supervisory challenges. Research investors and promoters' official records, such as the records on research production and gathering, were browsed to offer substantial basis to the findings. The data collection was done over a period of five months in 2025, between March and July.

The analysis of quantitative data was conducted with the tools of descriptive statistics (using means and standard deviations), and inferential statistics (conducting multiple regression analysis) in SPSS version 26. Regression analysis was applied to determine the relative factors; intrinsic and extrinsic factors in determining research commitment. Interview data were analyzed thematically in NVivo 12 and coded groupings developed around recurring patterns of data like the quality of supervision, resource shortages and workload issues. The triangulation provided by the mixed-methods approach preserved the validity and the reliability of the findings.

Findings

Quantitative analysis of the study brought out considerable predictors of research commitment among postgraduate students. The outline of key variables is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Factors Affecting Research Commitment*

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Research Commitment	3.82	0.91	200
Motivation	4.01	0.87	200
Self-Efficacy	3.75	0.94	200
Funding Availability	2.45	1.02	200
Supervision Quality	3.12	1.08	200
Institutional Support	2.89	0.99	200
Academic Workload	4.15	0.85	200

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The multiple regression analysis was performed to study the relative contribution of intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors in research commitment. Happy Hypothesis The predicted model was significant (F (5, 194) = 32.67, p < .001, R 2 = 0.46), implying that 46 percent of the variance in research commitment lies in the predictors. Results of the regression are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *Regression Analysis of Factors Predicting Research Commitment*

Predictor	B	t	p
Motivation	0.32	4.89	.000
Self-Efficacy	0.28	4.12	.000
Funding Availability	0.21	3.45	.001
Supervision Quality	0.25	3.78	.000
Institutional Support	0.18	2.99	.003
Academic Workload	-0.15	-2.45	.015

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Research commitment was predicted the most by motivation (beta 0.32, p <. 001) and self-efficacy (beta 0.28, p <. 001), followed by the quality of supervision (beta0.25, p <. 001) and the availability of funds (beta 0.21, p = .001). Institutional support impacted somewhat on commitment (β = 0.18, p = .003), whereas commitment was adversely affected by academic workload (beta = -0.15, p = .015).

Thematic analysis of the supervisor interviews revealed 4 major themes namely: challenges in supervision duties, shortage of resources, work stress and coworker cooperation. Supervisors observed that having to receive/provide feedback of different levels and large supervisory loads interfered with their capacity to provide effective mentorship. Restricted opportunities to the research facilities,

including laboratories and internet databases, was among the obstacles that recurred. Students with a teaching or administrative role expressed considerable time pressures causing a loss of research attention. On the contrary, the collaboration of peers was found to enable commitment, and students received the support of group discussions, shared materials.

Pillars of Research Dedication

Of complex nature, the relationship between the international notion of research commitment and the postgraduate students in Anambra State, Nigeria, is informed by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic elements, collectively termed the pillars of research commitment. The given pillars, which are motivation, self-efficacy, funding availability, quality of the supervision, institutional support, academic workload, and collaboration with peers define students rom oinetto stress levels and how committed they are to conducting high-quality research. Using empirical evidence and recent literatures, this section explains further what each of these pillars means, their contribution as stand-alone entities, and the dynamic interactions that their existence has in a resource-limited academic setting. The debate combines the results of the current study with international and comparative research in order to provide a detailed picture of what motivates research commitment.

Motivation is an inherent research commitment driver which states the internal factors and the external factors as to why students are driven to research practices. Self-Determination Theory suggests that motivation can be either intrinsic, aligned with individual interest or intellectual curiosity, or extrinsic, based on some sort of an external reward, career boost, or degree completion (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Within the scenario of postgraduate education, intrinsic motivation is especially fundamental, because it keeps learners going as they endure the bumps of scientific research, including crafting research designs or cogitating critical responses (Deemer et al., 2010). A 2021 study by Igwe and Okoli concluded that high levels of intrinsic motivation were proven to improve the ability of postgraduate students in Nigeria to deliver their theses on time even where resources were limited. On the other hand, those students whose main motivation was extrinsic rewards tended to be less resilient as they were faced with such obstacles as lack of funding or supervision (Amadi & Okoro, 2022). In Anambra State, according to qualitative data presented by this study, students who were motivated by their interest to contribute to the knowledge economy in Nigeria were more committed; nevertheless, these effects were lost due to systemic issues systematically, such as reception delays in supervisor feedback or the unavailability of research resources (Ezeani & Okonkwo, 2022). There is also an interaction between other pillars and motivation; a well-motivated student can strive to acquire outside resources or utilize the help of peers when the lack of finances becomes a problem, evidence to the dynamic interplay between the pillars (Chukwu & Nwosu, 2021).

Another crucial intrinsic pillar is self-efficacy which is the belief that the student has in his or her capability to succeed in performing

research-related tasks (Bandura, 1997). Inherited in Self-Efficacy Theory, the idea is as follows: students characterized by high self-efficacy will more likely set demanding research goals, stick to the process amid failures, and perform on a better level (Smith & Chen, 2018). Obi and Umeh (2023) discovered a similar relationship with a prospective controlled study conducted on Nigerian postgraduate students, indicated that students with strong research self-efficacy are more committed to their research projects even when there are ineffective supervision or limited resources. The result agrees with a similar study conducted by Jones et al. (2020), which established that self-efficacy mediates the effect of adverse environmental factors on research outcome. Students who had positive experiences with supervisors or research milestones (i.e., the publication of a paper) registered increasing self-efficacy, which strengthened commitment (Okeke & Uche, 2021). Nonetheless, qualitative findings pointed to the fact that supervision (often inconsistent) and accessibility to programs such as statistical software research environments tended to erode confidence resulting in disengagement. As an example, students in STEM-related fields (engineering) have complained about the poor condition of laboratory materials, which lowered their confidence in research abilities (Uche & Okeke, 2023). Self-efficacy would contribute to commitment which would be likely to be increased by interventions such as assessing and providing information about research skills, mentoring by peers (Chukwuma & Obi, 2023).

The availability of funding is a critical extrinsic pillar because it directly affects the capacity of students to get research materials, attend conferences, and do fieldwork. The problem of long-term funding of higher education through under-funding is a famous issue in Nigeria (Okebukola, 2022). Musa and Ibrahim (2023) conducted a study and identified that students enrolled in postgraduate programs that had access to research grants were 2.5 times more likely to submit their theses in a timely manner than those who could not access research grants. In the State of Anambra, the average ranking of funding availability is reduced (2.45, Table 1); this occurs because of the very limited sources of funding and financial support is mainly left to self-sustaining. This result supports the observation by Fatoki (2021) that the low funding of African universities results in a low amount of research output and stalling the progress of academia. In the supervisor interview, students would abandon projects because they could not afford the cost of collecting data and access to digital databases, a problem that, in most cases, was made worse by the absence of institutional or governmental grants (Ezeh & Nwankwo, 2021). Literature on other developing countries, especially South Africa, holds that strategic research grants, like those provided in the National Research Foundation, play a tremendous role towards increasing commitment to research (Brown & Green, 2019). Solving the problem of funding limitations by means of scholarships or stipends could therefore be conclusive in the State of Anambra.

Another pillar, which is extrinsic is the quality of supervision because supervisors can offer intellectual, constructive, and emotional support to shape the experience of students in the research. Good leadership supports an understanding that leads to a teamworking approach, promoting motivation and self-efficacy (Johnson & Lee, 2022). In Nigeria, supervision quality tends to suffer due to the large ratio of supervisor to student along with bureaucratic demands on faculty (Onyeka & Nwosu, 2022). The qualitative data showed that there were issues with the quality of supervision, which included late feedback ratings (mean score = 3.12, Table 1) as well as time constraints/heavy workload with supervisors allocated up to 10 students. A 2022 study by Igbo and Okoro identified timely and constructive feedback by the supervisor as one of the major drivers in the progress of research to be completed among the postgraduate students in Nigeria. On a global scale, Davies and Hughes (2020) note that supervisor training and workloads that are not overwhelming are instrumental in enhancing supervision quality. The administrative workload was mentioned by the supervisors who operate in Anambra State as one of the obstacles to the possibility of providing individualized guidance, so the institutional policies should be drawn up to govern the amount of work they can carry out and provide with mentorship skills (Okoye & Eze, 2023).

One of the determinants of the commitment of research is institutional support, which is institutional support in terms of access to research facilities such as libraries, labs, and digital facilities, and supportive policies. The results indicate that in a resource-limited environment such as that of Anambra State, there are deficits among institutions in terms of infrastructure and resources (mean=2.89). According to a 2023 study by Uche and Okeke, in Nigerian universities with weaker-equipped libraries, and stronger equipped laboratories, there were more research outputs among post graduates. Motivation systematically defined the barriers to commitment in the present study since students repeatedly listed the use of outdated library materials and the inability to access online journals in their responses (Kolawole & Adeyemi, 2021). Institutional policies, including funding to attend the conferences or allowing flexibility in the submission of theses, are other factors of creating a research-friendly environment (Thompson & Wilson, 2020). The qualitative data in this study indicated that students in the technical courses e.g., Federal Polytechnic Oko experienced unique challenges because of poor laboratory facilities thus they had limited capacity to do experiments (Afolabi & Olusola, 2022). The future invested in infrastructure and online resources could play an imperative role in increasing the commitment to research in the Anambra State.

Academic workload, especially when it comes to students with teaching/administrative responsibilities, was found to be an important obstacle to research commitment. Nigerians usually work as teaching assistants or lecturers, and this is in competition to the time required in research (Adeyemi & Ojo, 2021). The fact that the mean score of academic workload is high (4.15, Table 1) in the study and it is linked to

commitment in a negative manner (b = -0.15, p =.015, Table 2) validates its importance. The qualitative responses indicated that the students had to devote much time to teaching or organizational work, and they had little energy to conduct research. This conforms to that identified by Lawal and Yusuf (2023) where workloads are excessive in Nigerian universities resulting in delays in obtaining their theses and researching quality. The aggregate data on the workload management plan imply that features, such as a lower teaching load of postgraduate students, can be used to improve the research productivity (Brown & Green, 2019). In the Anambra State, universities such as Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu would be able to enforce policies to mitigate the amount of non-research duties, so that commitment could be established (Omotayo & Olusola, 2023).

The importance of peer collaboration as one of the essential extrinsic pillars is often underestimated, and it gives emotional support, access to shared resources, and a chance to exchange knowledge. A sense of collaboration in research teams leads to a community of responsibility, motivation, and a feeling of self-efficacy (Smith & Taylor, 2021). In this study, the qualitative information indicated that the commonness reported by students, who were subjects of peer research groups, was increased commitment because they could share resources such as journal articles or statistical instruments. Chukwuma and Obi (2023) also concluded that collaboration among peers in the case of Nigerian universities led to an increase in research output in the context of a positive network. In Anambra state, peer interaction is informal and the students organize study groups in order to overcome limited resources. Nevertheless, peer support might be institutionalized by forming research clusters or mentoring programs to increase its effect on others, as observed in successful programs in other African nations (Onuoha & Nwankwo, 2021). Individuals at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, for example, told us that group discussions taught them to manage complicated research procedures and this shows the importance of peer groups.

The pillars of research dedication do not operate in isolation, but should instead interact in complex fashion, forming commitment. In other words, the lack of funding or an underperforming supervisor may have negative consequences but can be offset by the positive impact, in terms of motivation and self-efficacy, on what comes next; students strive to find an alternative source, or they dig in and still find the strength to overcome the obstacle (Igbo & Okoro, 2022). On the other hand, an inappropriate workload or poor institutional support may destroy successful students; they then become rather disengaged (Nwosu & Eze, 2023). Peer collaboration may act as an influence of enhancing intrinsic parameters since it offers a supportive network (Chukwu & Nwosu, 2021). In Anambra State, these interactions are informed by other nation-wide challenges of higher education, such as inadequate funding and undercapitalization of facilities (Okebukola, 2022). As an example, students in professional fields represent a special case because of the lack of properly equipped laboratories that enhance the adverse factors of low funds and university resource allocations (Uche & Okeke, 2023). Learning how these

interactions work is essential to developing comprehensive interventions matrices to help offset both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that inhibit development of a strong research culture in the tertiary institutions Anambra State.

Strategies for Enhancing Research Commitment

Based on this finding, the following are the few strategies that should be employed so as to ensure that there is commitment towards research among postgraduate students in Anambra State:

- Increased training of supervisors: There should be frequent training sessions on how to be a mentor and provide feedback to the supervisees as the manner of supervision tends to be erratic.
- Improved Funding Opportunities: The lack of finances should be solved through the creation of research grants and academic funded scholarships by governments and other institutions so that the students can get the resources they require.
- Peer Support Groups: Peer-facilitated activities such as research communities and structured peer mentoring can effectively encourage support and assist in terms of both emotional and intellectual support to students.
- Workload Management: Universities should minimise teaching and administrative responsibility of postgraduate learners so as to enable them focus on research work.
- Increased Institutional Support: Proper investment in research facilities, including laboratories and digital libraries are important to provide enabling atmosphere to research.

These measures when put in place would improve their research output, decrease the time of completion of thesis, and build up their research output in Nigeria. In this light, the results support that intrinsic and extrinsic model set factors have significant impact on research commitment among postgraduate students in Anambra State. As inciting factors, motivation and self-efficacy are in line with the Self-Efficacy Theory, which holds that despite the lack of probability of achieving a goal in question, self-efficacy (confidence in useful abilities) will motivate an individual to continue working toward achieving this goal (Bandura, 1997). These findings support the previous research by Smith and Chen (2018) who concluded that more motivated students with high self-efficacy will have a greater tendency to complete the research assignment in the face of obstacles. In countries like Nigeria since there are many structural barriers, intrinsic factors play balancing roles and allow students to overcome challenges of lack of resources.

Extrinsic aspects especially the quality of supervision and fundings also occur to a large extent. Effective supervision is emotional and intellectual in a way that fosters commitment through provision of intellectual guidance and emotional support (Jones et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the results of the study indicate that there is a deficiency in the quality of supervision, with supervisors being

overworked as they usually have a large number of students under their supervision. The availability of the research materials and research fieldwork is restricted by the funding issue (the low mean value is 2.45), which is in line with the study by Musa and Ibrahim (2023) showing that universities in Nigeria are characterized by limited resources. Support by institutions (rated low) occurred, but this scheme was characteristic of infrastructure defows in the tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

The amount of academic workload was identified as a negative factor, since according to Adebayo and Okeke (2021), postgraduate students in Nigeria have to combine teaching or administrative functions which hinders research jobs. Qualitative findings also demonstrated that to counter these issues, peer teamwork reduces the effect of such challenges and, thus, may improve commitment with emphasis on collaboration-based research conditions (Eze & Obi, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper makes a holistic investigation into the determinants of research commitment among postgraduate students in Anambra State of Nigeria. There are strong signs that motivation, self-efficacy, and funding, as well as the crucially important component of supervision quality and support of the university influencing the commitment, exist. Contextual barriers such as resource limits and supervisory constraints have been identified by qualitative insights, which points to the importance of specific interventions. The offered strategies are a better supervisor training, increased funding, peer support programs, workload, and better institutional support, which is a set of ways that can be taken to strengthen the level of commitment to research. The findings are relevant to the general framework concerning the enhancement of postgraduate education in resource-limited contexts and will be used to form the basis of policy changes in the Nigerian educational sector.

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