Experiences of students pursuing a doctoral program: Voices from a private university in Ghana

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Abstract: This paper assessed the experiences of doctoral students in a private university about their doctoral studies. Using the case study design, 20 key informants were purposively selected, and in-depth interviewed to obtain their views on the phenomenon under investigation, with the support of ATLAS. Ti version 8.0 software, the data were thematically analyzed to answer the research questions, highlighting students' experience on course work, research work, student support, and the relevance of the doctoral degree to the students' current profession. The findings also showed that students have exposure to the basic guidelines of sound academic research. Still, their previous knowledge in research at the point of entry into the program is weak, making applying the knowledge gained in their thesis writing impractical. The data suggested that the students had varied reasons for pursuing the program. While those in academia needed the qualification to flourish their careers, the students from other sectors wanted to secure post-retirement opportunities.

Keywords: *doctoral degree, PhD, students, experience, private university, Ghana*

Introduction

The quest for individuals to acquire doctoral degrees has increased in the world. There has been a 57 percent and 64 percent increase in Canada and the United States, respectively, in doctoral enlistment somewhere in the range of 1988 and 2010 in that order. Be that as it may, wearing down from doctoral programs has remained reliably high in North America and Africa in recent years, with about half of the students exiting before completing. The situation results from the many issues some students face when they take up a program in doctoral degree (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Current research studies on students in higher education settings have generally concentrated on undergraduates' motivation, achievement, and well-being, mainly ignoring aspects pertinent to doctorate students' experiences (Sverdlik et al., 2018).

In Ghana, students or people taking up doctoral programs are rising. This could be due to the opportunities available possessing such degrees to offer the holder, including securing jobs quickly, getting promoted at the workplace, enhancing salary, ensuring post-retirement contracts, and enhancing social status in the Ghanaian community. This situation has heightened the demand for doctoral degrees compelling both public and private universities to tap into the market. In most fields of study, a doctoral degree is the highest level of education. They can be categorized as a research degree such as Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or professional doctorate. Such as Doctor of Medicine (MD), the Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), the Juris Doctor (JD), and others (Jones, 2018). The doctorates increasingly appeal to the attention of students who want to initially develop their professional training and professionalism to the peak level through research (Armsby et al., 2018) better meet the needs of their employers, and enhance productive interactions between academia and other sectors (Jones 2018). A doctoral degree may be completed in three/four years in regular programs and five/seven years when it is pursued part-time (Bao et al., 2018). An academic doctorate such as a PhD is often given for unique research and scholarship in established fields of study. It is expected to help students prepare for various occupations, but the primary concentration is to increase theoretical knowledge rather than improve professional practice. Kyvik and Olsen (2012) suggest that

rather than expanding existing doctoral programs to comprise the needs of diverse labor markets, PhD training should 'to a greater extent redirect changes in university research practice; more emphasis on interdisciplinarity, application of research findings in non-academic environments, collaboration in programs and networks, management of projects' (Alves et al., 2021).

A professional doctorate is conferred for work that directly contributes to knowledge or practice in a particular field. It calls for unique research and analysis and includes more hands-on training and coaching. It sometimes requires applicants to have relevant experience when seeking entry. A higher doctorate is typically given later in a person's career to honour distinguished scholars or practitioners. These doctorates are not generally pursued as standard university degrees. Similarly, the honorary doctorate is conferred to recognize a person's accomplishments. Its issuance does not require any prior academic or professional experience but is not open to students at a university's discretion.

For the past 15–20 years, there has been tremendous progress in research on doctoral education due to the intensity and challenging nature of doctoral programs. Numerous researches have been conducted on issues pertinent to the experiences of doctoral students, which comprised lengthy times to completion, lack of fulfillment (as measured by attrition), retention, a lack of finance that leads to debt, and supervision, particularly the extent to which supervisory duties may influence the ability to be "mentors." (McAlpine et al., 2020; Syerdlik et al., 2018). As alluded to earlier, Ghanaian universities, both public and private, also offer a variety of doctoral programs (Bingab et al., 2018). They interact with other universities overseas in some areas due to a lack of ability and resources (Alabi, 2013). This has widened access to doctoral education in the country; however, the experiences of these students seem not to have been studied (Abugre, 2018; Akyeampong, 2007). In studying a doctoral program in Ghana, most students' experiences are primarily overlooked. Hence this study sought to exhume the experiences of doctoral students pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy program offered in a private university in collaboration with a foreign university in Asia.

Ghana, the study's location, is a republic on Africa's west coast, bordered on the west by the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, on the east by the Republic of Togo, The Republic of Burkina Faso is to the north, while the Gulf of Guinea is to the south. Ghana's population is approximately thirty-eight million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Twenty-eight percent of Ghanaians live below the poverty line, which is less than US$ 1.25 a day (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Oil, gas, gold, diamonds, manganese ore, and other natural resources such as limestone, silica sand, and bauxite are in Ghana (Danso, 2020). Ghana is divided into sixteen regions to ensure effective governance and public service. Ghana's drive to maintain economic growth and gain a competitive advantage in the worldwide information economy necessitates the graduation of a highly educated and knowledgeable workforce from higher education institutions (Swanzy, 2016).

Ghanaian education is organized into three phases: primary education, secondary education, and higher secondary education (senior high school, technical and vocational education), and tertiary education (kindergarten, primary school, and junior high school) (higher education institutions) (Gondwe & Walenkamp, 2011). Ghana's higher education sector includes universities and non-universities. These are 14 public universities, ten technical universities, over 30 general nurse training colleges, 46 public colleges of education, and over 70 private tertiary institutions (Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, 2021). The universities offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs, but the undergraduate programs are dominant. The universities also offer more social sciences and humanity programs than pure sciences programs. This is probably because the setup cost for the social sciences and humanities programs is lower than pure sciences. Currently, most universities are offering doctoral programs. The duration for these programs ranges from 3-4years for full-time and 5years for part-time. Students who enroll in doctoral programs are required to take taught courses for a year and undertake research as part of the requirement for the award of the degree (National Accreditation Board, 2017).

Okokroko University, the research site for this study, is a private university established in 1979 by a Christian denomination with campuses in

three Ghana regions. It is part of the Christian denomination's global network of over 100 tertiary institutions. Okokroko University is the first private university to be granted a chartered status in 2006, which gives it the authority to award its degrees. A "Chartered" implies that the legislature of Ghana has granted Okokroko University certain rights and privileges. For Okokroko University to obtain this legal status, its statutes, examination procedures, and quality assurance standards were subjected to parliamentary scrutiny. The university has several faculties. These include the school of business, faculty of science, school of education, school of theology and missions, School of Arts and Social Sciences, and School of nursing and midwifery. Okokroko University offers both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, and this includes Masters and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. There are several modes for taking academic programs. These are distance mode, summer mode, and sandwich mode.

Literature Review

This study reviewed the literature on students' experiences pursuing a doctoral degree and the extent to which doctoral degree experience will impact students' professions.

Experiences of Students Pursuing a Doctoral Degree

There is extant literature regarding the experiences of students pursuing doctoral degrees. This notwithstanding, these research studies have inconsistent findings on the subject under review. The inconsistency may be due to the different universities and countries from which detailed research was carried out in Sverdlik et al. (2018), the PhD experience: a review of the factors influencing doctoral students' completion, achievement, and well-being. The study reviewed 163 empirical articles on the topic under consideration. It was found that doctoral students often experience two sets of factors that fit with supervisor and institutional restrictions and expectations. Student factors, on the other hand, frequently include demographic parameters, disciplinary background, ability, and life issues (e.g., financial support, living arrangement, number of agreements, etc.).

(Castello et al., 2017) also stated that enrollment status, discipline, gender, and race play a significant role in the doctoral experience.

Lastly, Salifu and Agbenyega (2021), in the study of doctoral students' learning experience in Ghana: exploring a new curriculum using Bourdieu's concepts, found that, although the participants were broadly satisfied with some aspects of their programs, the additional cost associated with its duration, the lack of quality and timely feedback from supervisors and difficulty accessing conference funding were the key challenges and experiences of doctoral students.

Extent Doctoral Degree Experience Impact, the Profession of Students

A doctorate holder has many opportunities to be selected from a profession depending on the type of degree being held. However, before attaining the height of a doctorate holder, some experiences are gained during that period. According to (Scott et al., 2004), a doctorate has influenced and impacted the professional attitude, disposition, and confidence of students who undertook that program. (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016), in the report for the Higher Education Funding Council of the UK, identified that there is robust evidence of impact on professional practice and changes in the workplace and that more research should be conducted to explore these impacts.

Also, in the study of the impact of doctoral studies on personal and professional lives conducted by Hramiak (2017), it was found that the experiences gained through the methods and models of training used to impart knowledge on doctoral students reflected and impacted their personal as well as their professional lives. A case study approach using questionnaires and detailed semi-structured interviews to ascertain the views of doctoral students was used for the study.

Theoretical Framework

The theory underpinning this study is Astin's theory of student involvement. Alexander Astin propounded the idea of Student Involvement in 1984. The theory explains how desirable outcomes for higher education institutions are viewed about how students change and develop

due to being involved in co-curricular. Precisely, the theory posits that students are more likely to be involved and have good experiences if they have access to high-quality programs and services that stimulate and challenge their learning. The theory further states that extracurricular activities and classroom assignments must be directly related to students' goals and lives. Also, resources are accessible to students at their convenience, so they directly involve themselves in campus life and have good experiences. The students' experiences in academia could be a pleasant one or not if the expectations of such students are met. These expectations range from but are not limited to access to high-quality programs and services that stimulate and challenge their learning, availability of academic-related or financial resources, ability to blend social and academic life, and many more.

Research Questions

1. What are students' experiences pursuing a doctoral degree in a private university?
2. To what extent will doctoral degree experience impact students' profession in the private university?

Methodology

This section describes the research design and setting, the sampling method used, the instrument validity and reliability, the data collection procedure, the data analysis, the ethical considerations, and the researcher's reflexivity.

Research Design and Setting

A qualitative approach was employed using the case study design to obtain a deeper understanding of the experiences of doctoral students pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy program offered in a private university in Ghana de-identified with a pseudonym (American Psychology Association 2021) as Okokroko University.

Sampling

The gatekeepers of the university were engaged through a telephone call to obtain access to the research site. The purposive sampling technique selected 20 Doctoral candidates enrolled for the 2020 academic year. They had the status of critical informants because they were knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study (Amedahe, 2002).

Instrument Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, trustworthiness, and clarity, the interview guide after its design was given to colleagues, supervisors, and experts to review for approval or suggestions. It also allowed for refinement and content reliability. All concerns raised by those who studied the interview guide were deliberated on, and the needed changes were effected to curtail the situation whereby the researcher's beliefs could make the data points for eliciting respondents' information.

Data Collection

The rules of interviews were explained to the interviewees in order not to leave them in doubt as to what to expect during and after the interviews The participants offered a conducive place and time for the discussion. A semi-structured interview guide and telephone interviews were used to obtain data. Because there was an occasional internet outage that disrupted the interview flow, each interview session lasted around one hour. All the interview sessions were audio-recorded with a Techno Spark 2 phone with the participants' permission. After each session, the audio recordings were played to the participants to check whether what was recorded was actually what they wanted to say

Data Analysis

The data from the interviews were transcribed and uploaded into ATLAS Ti software which allowed me to apply codes to collections of unstructured text, provide functionality for identifying and visualizing content that could be used for the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The interviewees were informed that they had the right to opt out of the interview or not answer any questions if they felt uncomfortable (American Psychology Association 2021).

Voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants, the doctoral program they pursue, and the university they

attended were assured using pseudonyms. This precaution was taken to respect the participants' and university's rights to privacy which, according to Bui (2009), are factors that augment ethical considerations in research.

Researcher's Reflexivity

Being a doctoral student cast me as an inside researcher (Swanzy, 2016). I had multiple commonalities with my respondents, such as postgraduate experiences. This status offered me opportunities as well as challenges. As an insider, the language the doctoral students used concerning doctoral experiences was well understood. There was also easy access to a wide range of data than outside researchers. Some students also discussed my issues.

Furthermore, my insider status made it easier to verify the evidence from other interviewees. Lastly, my study participants' in-depth knowledge about doctoral experiences made it difficult to provide incorrect information because they knew I would detect that (Swanzy, 2016; Potts, 2008).

Findings and Discussion

The themes that emerged and form the main discussion of this paper are coursework experience, research work experience, financial support experience, academic and social life experience, social life experience, and the impact on doctoral students' current profession. The findings, debates, and themes that emerged from the data analysis are presented in this section.

Experiences of Pursuing a Doctoral Degree in a Private University

In response to research question one, interviewees were asked to express their views on their experiences in pursuing a doctoral degree in a private university. The interviewees' reactions are explained below following the themes: experiences of student's course work, experiences of student's research work, experiences on student support, financial support experience, experiences of balancing academic performance, and experiences of campus life.

Experiences of students on course work. According to the research, most PhD students have not encountered many problems in their studies.

The interviewees reported that their coursework was well structured, and they were satisfied with the course delivery mode. Interviewees gave the following responses:

From my experience, the course content is well structured, and the blended delivery model employed by the university was effective. (DR-10)

The assessment task was somehow flexible, even though it was stressful to complete all tasks. (DR-4)

My expectation in receiving vigorous academic research guidance is not being met" (DR-7).

The educational resources offered by the universities are readily available and assessable. The school librarians also provide guidance when students are in need" (DR-1).

The above experience of informants implies that almost all PhD students believed that the course content was structured to standard, and they were very satisfied with the blended course delivery approach.

This finding indicates that the department structures for running doctoral programs in terms of teaching and learning are vital components of the entire doctoral program. As part of their doctoral, students are allowed to go through one-year coursework as an opportunity to reflect on their basic knowledge of their field and expand into their research work (Govender & Dhunpah, 2011; The conversation Africa Inc, 2021).

Experiences of students on research activities. PhD research work experience is one of the essential aspects that every PhD student must have in their course of study (Gearity & Mertz, 2012; Hanak, 2021). Students revealed how stressful academic research could be to produce a suitable proposal due to inadequate guidelines and exposure to credible academic writing. Based on the shared experiences on research work, the following were gathered:

"I have inadequate exposure to academic writing skills" (DR-15).

"As of now, I still have a challenge in presenting a good proposal for my supervisor" (DR-6).

"Although I have exposure to the basic guidelines of good academic research, applying

it in my main thesis is a hell for me, but I am gradually learning through experience" (DR-3).

As for me, I have come to realize that research work entails more than what I have acquired now. (DR-4)

Student Supervisor relation to me is perfect, just that it seems lecturers have limited time in attending students. (DR-19)

Surprisingly, other interviewees believed their prerequisite knowledge was weak as the entry point into the doctoral program, which made the entire research work process challenging. DR-9 and DR-4 commented, respectively, as stated below:

"I have come to know that my weak knowledge in basic research during my Master's program has resulted in the difficulties I face in assuming quality doctoral candidate's research skills."

"The basic research skills I received during my undergraduate and Masters' program is just inadequate; that is why I am still struggling to build on current skills. I am doing well to catch up because I need it to complete the PhD program".

Most students pursuing the PhD program felt they were not adequately prepared in academic writing skills. They were not satisfied even though the cordial relationship with their supervisors gave them optimism to progress along. These interviewees' experiences are in corroboration with Virtanen et al., 2016) findings, which reported that doctoral candidates are likely to make headway in worth academic research work if they remain dedicated to achieving their educational aims. Although other studies attributed the inadequate preparation in academic writing skills of PhD students to the lack of qualified, experienced lecturers to teach and supervise doctoral students (Goski & Mohammed, 2018), some are of the view that a constructive supervisory role is paramount in students' progress and satisfaction with their thesis writing (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Conversely, some of the interviewees also associated their weak knowledge in basic research with their past undergraduate and Master's program, even though they are striving to grasp the skill and progress in their thesis writing. Meanwhile, previous research findings argue that doctoral students' competence and confidence in research skills are arbitrated by their previous experiences and knowledge they have developed during their undergraduate and postgraduate studies (Perry, 2012).

Experiences on students support. In achieving the goals of doctoral students, the scholarly community often provides the primary support such as a learning center, counseling center, academic library system, and organization of the academic conference, seminar, and workshops for continual studies (Virtanen et al., 2018). In assessing the experiences on students' support, some of the shared experiences the interviewees shared are stated below:

"I usually get guidance in writing from the online resources available at the university's library" (DR-18).

"The support from the department and the students' association such as GRASAG are not in line with purely our research work but rather social activities (DR-8).

"I get inspired by our seminars and academic discussions organized by the department, and I can enhance my thesis as I observe others present their works for feedbacks" (DR-16).

The above finding suggests that interviewees received support in writing through seminars and accessing online resources and journals from the university's library. Notwithstanding, some interviewees also reported that student support should benefit from student associations. The university focuses on social and other instructional activities than academic research. However, earlier findings on doctoral education advocate student engagement to be regulated by a multifaceted and dynamic interchange between the student and the social environment rather than solely academics (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Hence there is a need to extend the balance of academic and social support to doctoral students.

Experiences in financial support. More significant funding opportunities for doctoral students, in turn, have been found to relate with higher levels of students' inclusive contentment with their doctoral experience and minor attrition (Gururaj et al., 2010; Leijen et al., 2016). Although the doctoral education is partially funded in the public universities through basic grants, institutional factor grants, performance funding

grants, and research grants (Okebukola, 2015), the interviewees indicated that they covered their costs of pursuing the doctoral program with no financial support from the university what so ever. As two interviewees remarked:

"I sponsored my doctoral program with my salary and other projects I run outside the university" (DR-12).

"I provided for all the expenses and such as purchasing books, running photocopies and printing assignments, paying school fees and working on my thesis" (DR-10).

Based on the experiences expressed by interviewees above, it implies that students from private universities do not receive financial support, unlike their counterparts in public universities.

As reported by the interviewees, this finding is dissimilar from the conclusion by Gearity (2012), which suggested that doctoral studies have great financial opportunities for students and the warrant to conduct postgraduate studies is valid for life whiles students can complete their studies alongside other professional jobs.

Experiences in balancing an academic and social life. Striking a balance between academic and social life is the most challenging aspect of doctoral students (Inkinen et al., 2013), therefore an effort to attain a balance requires purposeful management of time, priorities, roles and responsibilities, and stress levels (Martinez et al., 2013). Below are the responses of interviewees concerning their experience of balancing their academic and social life as pursuing their educational program:

"I am in my third year and still having trouble to find out that perfect balance, yet I believe that my academic and social lives are more balanced than the past" (DR-20).

"Balancing academics and social life have not been easy at all. It is either I satisfy one at the expense of the other. It is the most difficult aspect in pursuing my PhD because of the stress involved". (DR-17)

"I am a year away from submitting my doctoral thesis; for a very long time, I feel the most important part of my life has been occupied by my academic research work." (DR-1)

The responses stated above indicate that balancing doctoral degree pursuit is very demanding. This finding corroborates with the submission (Inkinen et al., 2013) that balancing academics and social life may be achieved by providing doctoral students with the resources they need such as supervision, constructive feedback of their learning, and development as a researcher, peer support, and control over their research. However, another study reported that being a PhD researcher gives some freedom as to when you should work to get the most out of your productive hours no matter where they are (Bates et al., 2013). It requires enough planning as to how one needs to structure academic tasks in line with other social activities in other to be a productive doctoral candidate.

Experiences of campus life. Research has shown that doctoral life on campus presents many new experiences: being away from home, meeting new people, and managing your time to finish academic assignments (Bates et al. 2011; Sverdlik et al., 2018). Interviewees were asked to share their experiences on campus life as they pursued their doctoral program. DR-2, DR-4, and DR-17 gave their responses as respectively stated below:

"I have many experiences such as new friends, new living situation, new courses, new classes, and new lecturers. And these have challenged me to improve on my time management skills and my academic adjustment".

"The doctoral program projects the academic research work activities to a large extent at the expense of co-curricular activities such as entertainment, club society, politics, etc."

"Maybe balancing my job workload with PhD, academic activities had not enabled me to experience full campus life unlike when I was under-graduate. It requires adequate planning".

It could be implied from the above responses of interviewees that pursuing a doctoral degree is highly demanding. However, if students manage their time effectively from the onset, there could be plenty of opportunities to achieve a productive and enjoyable academic campus life balance. Other studies confirm that full-time doctoral candidates struggle to create balance in their social and educational lives (Inkinen et al., 2013; Stimpson & Filer, 2011) but can still facilitate

the program completion through purposeful scheduling of time, roles, and responsibilities, stress levels and other priorities (Haynes et al., 2012; Perry,2012.)

Impact of Doctoral Studies on Students' Profession

Experiences in the current profession. Employers value doctoral graduates' invaluable expertise in subject matter, outstanding research and analytical skills, their capacity for critical thinking in bringing scholarly views to help solve the organization's problems (Crossman & Clarke, 2010).

Experiences on knowledge and skill contribution to current profession

Studying doctoral programs may purposively advance understanding in one's chosen field to contribute meaningfully to the current job. Some of the responses of the interviewees on how the knowledge they have acquired in their doctoral degree pursuit is contributing to their current profession have been expressed as follows:

"To some extent, I can critically analyze issues regarding my job and suggest feasible solutions." (DR-8)

"While earning my doctorate, I gained a wealth of knowledge and abilities that enable me to be more effective in my field." (DR-11)

"Frankly, I have not yet experienced any major difference in terms of knowledge contribution to my work, but I am hoping to achieve that after my program." (DR-3)

The above responses of interviewees suggest that the knowledge acquired by doctoral students complements massively to their current job experience in terms of contributing to understanding.

More so, interviewees confirmed through their responses that their doctoral experience had fostered new practical skills apart from the theoretical knowledge of their current role in the profession. Interviewees responded in this manner as follows;

"With my work, I am not sure how the PhD will impact my current work schedule, but at least I will have the recognition." (DR-13)

"I have achieved enough skills to complement my technical skills, which are helping my current profession to progress." (DR-16)

"Undoubtedly, my research knowledge and skills now have improved upon the research supervisory role to my students." (DR-16).

From the assertions provided by interviewees above, it can be concluded that PhD students in the private university receive skills that complement their competency as a significant impact on their current profession.

Doctoral Experiences and Career Opportunities. One of the tremendous benefits of a PhD is that it opens to career prospects that would not otherwise be possible (Bingab et al.,2018; Hanak,2021). Interviewees gave their responses as shown below on their experiences on career opportunities elevation in the current job:

"I hope the doctoral degree will elevate me from my current job position after completion." (DR-5).

"With my work, I am not sure how the PhD will impact my current work schedule, but at least I will have the recognition." (DR-13)

"As a teacher in senior high school, I wish I progress by getting the opportunity to lecture at the higher education level." (DR-20)

"This is the only way I can maintain my position as a lecturer at my workplace." (DR-9).

Another interesting issue that emerged under this theme is that some interviewees anticipated their doctoral degree, when acquired, could also offer them job opportunities during their post-retirements. Two interviewees shared their experiences below:

"As a security officer and five years away from my retirement, I hope to seek teaching opportunities during my retirement." (DR-1)

"I can make use of my doctoral degree both during and after pension if my service is needed in my field of study." (DR-7)

These assertions expressed by students imply majority of doctoral students in the studied private university have a varied purpose of pursuing postgraduate degrees. While those in academia needed a doctoral degree qualification

to flourish their career, those from other sectors sought to acquire the degree for self-recognition and securing post-retirement jobs.

Based on these findings, most doctoral students in the study context gradually seem to lose postgraduate degrees' quality and thematic priorities (Abugre, 2018; Mwaikokesya, 2014).

Conclusion

The findings led to the following conclusions when the two questions were explored: firstly, on the experiences of students pursuing a doctoral degree, it was found that, out of the six constructs used for measuring experiences of students pursuing a doctoral degree, three of them brought pleasant experiences and the other three yield not too enjoyable experiences. According to the respondents, experiences on course work, student support, and campus life were enjoyable. On the other hand, the different three experiences on research activities, financial aid, and blending social and academic life were not too pleasant. From the findings, it could be concluded that doctoral students do not fully have enjoyable experiences going about their programs in Ghana. In the pleasant experiences, the students stated hitches that were further addressed. The stressful and tiring nature of doctoral programs should not be accompanied by other elements which could be avoided or curtailed to lessen the stress of doctoral students.

Secondly, on the question about the extent doctoral degree experiences impact students' profession, it was found that doctoral students in private universities receive skills and training that complement their competency as a significant impact on their current profession. This indicates that the concerns raised by the doctoral student when addressed and more people with the proper qualification allowed to enroll in doctoral programs would go a long way to help companies, which will benefit the country. With the competency and knowledge imbued in them throughout the program, this professional will make the right decisions and yield to companies' growth and the economy at large. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experiences of doctoral students during their schooling days have a bearing on their professional output or efficacy.

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