

Factors Affecting The Persistence And Academic Performance Of OMSC Faculty And Employees In Seeking Master's Degree

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Abstract.

Pursuing graduate studies is an important decision in life that should not be taken lightly. The study identified factors that affects the persistence of graduate students in pursuing Master's degree on either through scholarship grants or self-expense study. Using a survey questionnaire online thru google forms, 136 respondents answered back. The result of the study found that majority of the respondents are female and 66% of the respondents finished their master's degree. Institutional factors like expertise of the faculty was very important to respondents are important to the graduate students. While the academic performances are affected by positive factors like support of the family and friends, negative factors like poor time management and work overload, 69% the respondent's GPA is 2.0 and above which indicates good performance in graduate school.

Keywords: *persistence of graduate students, academic performance, institutional factors for persistence, personal factors for persistence*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a lifelong process. This is even true with today's highly competitive job market where teachers and employees need to update their knowledge and skills every now and then. Even an employee who just graduated in college or are someone who has already been working for years now, need to have a strong drive for continuous learning in order for them to stay ahead of the curve. This is why many people consider pursuing a graduate school degree. However, graduate school is not cheap. Thus, pursuing postgraduate studies is an important decision in in life that should not be taken lightly. Getting a master's degree is an investment. One has to spend greater amount of time, effort, and money in getting education. Master's-degree candidates, especially those who pursue a degree on a part-time basis at a public institution [1]—the focus of the present study—have not received particular attention. Just as understanding persistence among undergraduates is important for both students and their institutions, so, too, is such understanding for adults in part-time graduate programs. The high attrition rates for graduate students—with a national average at

about 50 percent—make it imperative that we gain a greater understanding of the factors associated with their persistence.

The graduate students of today's generation are likely to be adults who work full-time[1]; they have family responsibilities; enroll on a part-time basis, often after a gap of several years after completing their bachelor's degree; commute distances to and from classes; take online or distance education courses; and often find themselves without peers with whom they can easily relate. Similarly, expectations for faculty members are high [6], Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) faculty are expected to establish a sustainable research trajectory, a teaching practice, and a service/leadership role all while pursuing tenure and promotion success. Although many colleges and universities have established STEM faculty development programs, a deficiency in holistic professional support remains, specifically within the integration and alignment of those disparate professional activities with individual and institutional goals. On the other hand, when it comes to quality assurance, professional-public accreditation is aimed at developing a system of recommendations for improving the quality of educational programs in higher education [2]. As is understood in experts on professional-public accreditation includes representatives of employers, education and students. Additional to this, accreditation can be referred to as the procedure followed for official recognition or quality assurance [3].

It provides the opportunity of promoting excellence in the field of education. It are often stated because the process during which the standard of an academic institution or a specific program is evaluated so on formally recognize it if it meets certain standards. On the benefits of having Master's degree, earning a master's degree helps a person gain specialized knowledge to advance in his field [5]. As the workforce evolves, a graduate degree shows ones dedication to enhancing his industry expertise and credibility. One can focus on a particular field of study, which helps him become more competitive in his field. The benefits of a master's degree can also help build on current abilities, gain new skills, or even transition to an entirely new field. Additionally, as much of the worth of an undergraduate degree is in the qualification itself [7], the most important reasons to go to grad school may be more for the professional skills, the personal development and the valuable connections one can make with fellow graduate students, academics and industry experts. It is also frequently said that grad school is about much more than obtaining a few letters behind your name and a fancy piece of paper; it's about developing yourself professionally so that you're ready to enter the world of work.

If you act smart in graduate school , by the time you graduate you'll have built yourself knowledgeable landing mat of contacts and relationships, which can serve to stay you in the field and, ultimately, employed. Finally, the accreditation process looks for programs of the institution regarding faculty development and the ratio of faculty acquiring professional growth. An evaluation process of promoting faculty is also being required by ISA. The study will look at specific institutional and external factors

that might contribute to persistence among faculty and employee's master's-level students. This study will determine the number of faculty acquiring professional development and growth from 2016-2019, either through scholarship grants or self-supported study, and map their progress and success. The study will also serve as an evidence for both quality assurance evaluation processes when it comes to faculty development area. The result will also help the HR office in identifying qualified personnel for promotions and further trainings needed by the faculty and employees of Occidental Mindoro State College. The study aimed to determine the profile and the institutional and external factors that might contribute to the persistence of faculty and employees of OMSC in pursuing graduate studies. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Determine the demographic profile of OMSC faculty and employees pursuing graduate studies.
2. Determine the effect of the following factors in their persistence to finish graduate studies of OMSC faculty and employees:
 - a. Institutional factors;
 - b. Satisfaction with experiences; and
 - c. Personal factors;
3. Determine the academic performance of respondents in terms of grades.

II. METHODS

The study was descriptive in nature and will utilize a survey questionnaire to gather data from the respondents. The respondents of the study are the 206 faculty/employees who have finished or currently pursuing their master's degree program, on either institutional, CHED, DOST or other scholarship grants, or self-supporting.

Sample Size

Using the Slovin's formula with the 95% margin of error, the total sample size respondents of the study is 175 students.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Slovin's Formula: } n &= N / (1 + N e^2) \\
 &= 206 / (1 + 206 * 0.05^2) \\
 &= 206 / 1.515 \\
 &= 135.97 \text{ or } 136 \text{ respondents}
 \end{aligned}$$

Sampling Techniques

Random sampling was chosen for this study due to its simplicity and ease of conducting the survey in comparison to other sampling methods such as stratified sampling, cluster sampling, systematic sampling and two-stage sampling using cluster and systematic. Random sampling was chosen because it allows to randomly selecting samples from a group of population. It is easy to conduct and save time (Statistical Consultants Ltd, 2012). The study was conducted at OMSC campuses and utilized online distribution and gathering of questionnaires through google forms.

Research Instrument

The authors developed the questionnaire with input from graduate faculty, staff, and students. It consisted four parts:

- 1. demographic information
- 2. institutional factors related to persistence
- 3. personal factors related to persistence
- 4. academic performance

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

The respondents of the study are the graduate students who have graduated or currently enrolled in master’s degree. As shown in figure 1, 74 of them are female and 62 are male.

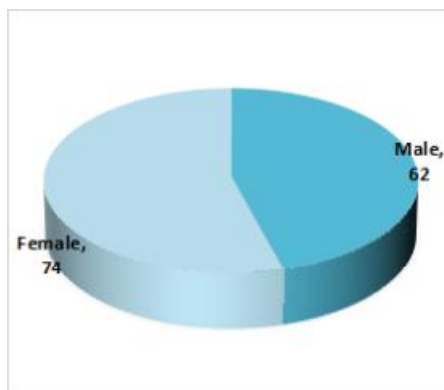


Fig 1. Profile of the respondents according to gender

Majority of the respondents finished their Master’s Degree (89) as shown in figure 2. While 43 respondents have already gained units in Masteral, and 4 are currently enrolled in Doctoral.

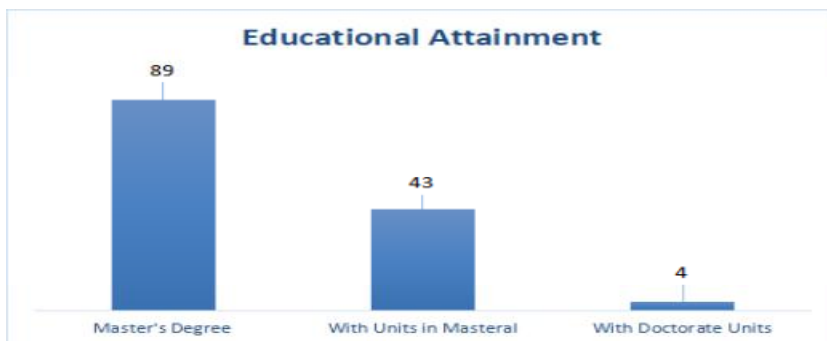


Fig 2. Profile of the respondents according to educational attainment

Support to the study of the respondents, which deals with the financing aspect of their tuition fees are categorized to whether they have scholarship grants or supports their own study. As shown in figure 3, there were 59 institutional scholar, 23 CHED scholar and 54 are self-supporting.

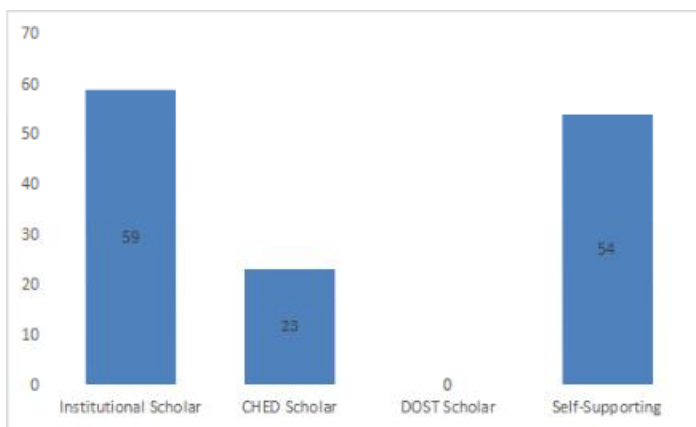


Fig 3. Profile of the respondents according to institutional support.

Persistence

There are factors that affects persistence of the graduate students in their study. Table 1 presents the importance of institutional factors in the persistence of the respondents. The expertise of the faculty was very important to respondents with a mean of 4.86, followed by faculty concern to students with a mean of 4.83 with a descriptive rating of “Very important”. All the parameters were to be “Very Important” by the respondents of the study.

Table 1. Importance of institutional factors for persistence

Parameters	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Being treated with respect	4.71	Very Important
2. Faculty enthusiasm for teaching	4.74	Very Important
3. Faculty understanding of adult learners	4.63	Very Important
4. Faculty feedback on assignments	4.66	Very Important
5. Expertise of faculty	4.86	Very Important
6. Fairness in grading	4.80	Very Important
7. Teaching methods used	4.77	Very Important
8. Interactions with faculty in the classroom	4.77	Very Important
9. Faculty concern for students	4.83	Very Important
10. Interactions with students in the classroom	4.80	Very Important
11. Interactions with faculty outside classroom	4.54	Very Important
12. Interactions with program advisor	4.71	Very Important
13. Library	4.51	Very Important
14. Academic advising	4.63	Very Important
Overall Mean	4.71	Very Important

Legend: 4.51-5.50 – very important; 3.51-4.50 – moderately important; 2.51-3.50 – neutral; 1.51-2.50 – slightly important; 0.51-1.50 – not important

As shown in table 2, respondents are “Very Satisfied” with the Supportive learning environment (4.60), Pleased with decision to attend graduate school (4.57), Provided services led to student success (4.57), and Satisfaction with intellectual development (4.54). All other parameters got a descriptive rating of “Satisfied” with an overall mean of 4.51, which is equivalent to “Very Satisfied”.

Table 2. Satisfaction with experiences.

Parameters	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Satisfaction with instruction	4.49	Satisfied
Enjoyed being a student in the program	4.49	Satisfied
Satisfaction with intellectual development	4.54	Very Satisfied
Pleased with decision to attend graduate school	4.57	Very Satisfied
Supportive learning environment	4.60	Very Satisfied
Convenient scheduling of classes	4.43	Satisfied
Provided services led to student success	4.57	Very Satisfied
University cared about the individual	4.43	Satisfied
Overall Mean	4.51	Very Satisfied

Legend: 4.51-5.50 – very satisfied; 3.51-4.50 –satisfied; 2.51-3.50 – unsure; 1.51-2.50 – dissatisfied; 0.51-1.50 – very dissatisfied

Individuals who have contributed in the persistence of the respondents in their study have been identified in table 3. Respondents found their Employer and Academic Advisor “Very Important” with both means of 4.71, followed by Parents (4.69), Instructor (4.69), co-workers (4.54), friends outside of school (4.54), and classmates (4.51).

Table 3. Importance of Individuals for persistence.

Parameters	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Spouse/Partner	4.09	Moderately Important
Employer	4.71	Very Important
Children	4.14	Moderately Important
Parents	4.69	Very Important
Instructors	4.69	Very Important
Co-workers	4.54	Very Important
Classmates	4.51	Very Important
Academic advisor	4.71	Very Important
Friends outside of school	4.40	Moderately Important
Siblings	4.54	Very Important
University staff	4.49	Moderately Important
Overall Mean	4.50	Moderately Important

Legend: 4.51-5.50 – very important; 3.51-4.50 – moderately important; 2.51-3.50 – neutral; 1.51-2.50 – slightly important; 0.51-1.50 – not important

Table 4 presents the reasons of the respondents for attending graduate school. The parameters that Fulfill personal growth and enrichment got the highest mean (4.97), followed by Advance in career (4.94), Gain new knowledge and skills (4.91), and Increase salary (4.74). This means that the respondents strongly agree with these reasons for attending graduate school.

Table 4. Reasons for attending graduate school

Parameters	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Gain new knowledge and skills	4.91	Strongly Agree
Advance in career	4.94	Strongly Agree
Fulfill personal growth and enrichment	4.97	Strongly Agree
Increase salary	4.74	Strongly Agree

Serve as role model for family	4.49	Agree
Satisfy employer	4.46	Agree
Make a career change	4.46	Agree
Enter the job market	4.20	Agree
Satisfy members of family	4.23	Agree
Satisfy friends	3.83	Agree
Overall Mean	4.52	Strongly Agree

Legend: 4.51-5.50 – Strongly Agree; 3.51-4.50 – Agree; 2.51-3.50 – Neither agree or disagree; 1.51-2.50 – Disagree; 0.51-1.50 – Strongly Disagree

Academic Performance

All of the respondents answered that they have goal for furthering studies. And when it comes to the academic performance of the respondents, figure 4 showed that 94 of them have grades 2.0 and above and only 12 have GPA below 2.0. There are 30 respondents who opted not to answer.

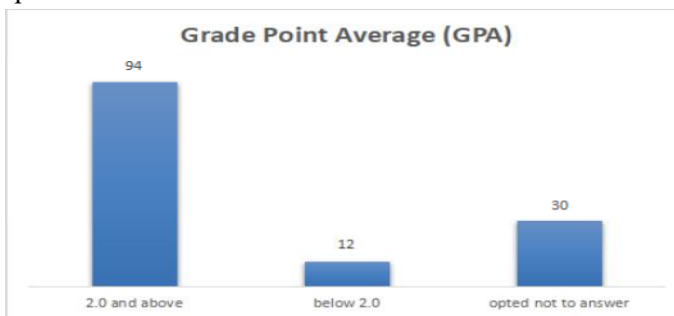


Fig 4. Grade Point Average (GPA)

The factors that positively affects the academic performance of the respondents are ranked in table 5. Support of the family and friends ranked first, followed by Interest in the subject, Simulation activities and Financial support from the organization/ school both ranked 3.5, Experience in writing ranked fifth, and Encouragement of co-workers ranked last.

Table 5. Factors positively affecting academic performance.

Parameters	Frequency	Rank
Support of the family and friends	124	1
Interest in the subject	105	2
Simulation activities	70	3.5
Financial support from the organization/ school	70	3.5
Experience in writing	62	5
Encouragement of co-workers	58	6

Poor time management ranked first which greatly affects the academic performance of the respondents, as shown in table 6. While work overload in some courses ranked second, commitments outside the school on 3rd rank, and discontentment with the program of study ranked last.

Table 6. Factors negatively affecting academic performance

Parameters	Frequency	Rank
Poor time management	93	1

Work overload in some courses	85	2
Commitments outside the school	62	3
Discontentment with the program of study	35	4

IV. CONCLUSION

In consideration of the objectives of the study and the data gathered and tabulated, the following conclusions were derived:

1. Majority of the respondents pursuing graduate studies are female. 66% have finished their Master's Degree.
2. The persistence of the respondents to finish their graduate studies are affected by the following factors:
 - a. Institutional factors are found very important specially the expertise of the faculty was very important to respondents;
 - b. Respondents are very satisfied with their experiences in studying like having a supportive learning environment.
 - c. Personal factors like having individuals, employer, academic advisor, parents and co-workers, who affects their persistence are very important to the respondents.
3. The academic performance is affected by positive and negative factors but the grade point average of 2.0 and above by the 69% of the respondents proved that respondents performed well in graduate school.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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