

Why PhD? Understanding Motives behind Pursuing a PhD

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ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the rationale of earning a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree as the doctoral education is a challenging, but valuable, academic and professional route to development. Although the conventional wisdom tends to explain doctoral study as a way of career advancement or academic curiosity, the new ways of thinking are diverse and changes as time goes on. The aim of the current research was to comprehend the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that affect the choices of those scholars who decide to join doctoral programs, as well as the factor of mentorship, financial issues, and difficulties they faced in the course of their studies. Qualitative research design was used, with data gathered on a sample of fifteen PhD students who had recently (2020 to present) joined the University of the Punjab and the University of Okara by taking an open-ended questionnaire using an online platform. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the responses and made it easier to identify patterns and meanings that recur in the experiences of the participants. Results showed that personal interest, intellectual curiosity, and love of research were also the major motivators of many respondents. There were also extrinsic factors such as career progression, money and professional needs, which also significantly contributed. Also, mentorship and orientation proved to be important in decision-making, and motives to work were identified to be changing depending on the academic challenges, finances, and balance between work and life. It is concluded in the study that doctoral motivation is dynamic and situation specific and it is formed by both individual aspirations and realities of the structure. The knowledge of these factors can be used to help institutions and policymakers create favorable doctoral conditions that strengthen persistence, well-being and successful completion.

Keywords: Doctor of Philosophy; Motivation; Career Advancement; Mentorship

INTRODUCTION

The doctorate education has been gradually becoming a characteristic attribute of higher education in the global arena, the highest level of academic qualification and research specialization. The intent to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree is frequently connected with intellectual progress, knowledge production and professional appreciation but the choice to follow such a challenging academic route is influenced by various personal, institutional, and socio-economic factors. Motivation is a key to the start and continuation of doctoral engagement since it guides and supports goal-oriented behaviour among learners. When applied to doctoral study, motivation can be taken as the factor that prompts people to initiate, continue and accomplish complicated academic activities. Further evidence based on Pakistan indicates that intrinsic motivational variables like autonomy, research interest, and competence are important factors on doctoral persistence and completion (Imtiaz et al., 2023).

Academic sources have indicated repeatedly the twofold impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on academic decision-making. Examples of intrinsic motivations are intellectual curiosity, interest in research, the need to master and self-develop and examples of extrinsic motivations include career advancement, social mobility, and extrinsic rewards. The two types of motivation play a central role in boosting involvement and interest in educational environments (Khuhro, 2022). Researchers on doctoral and professional doctoral students also show that motivations are complex and dynamic, often including pre-intrinsic and pre-extrinsic factors that change throughout the education lifetime (Wang et al., 2022). In the context of the self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation with the support of autonomy, feedback, and emotional support has been linked to better learning outcomes and performance, which highlights the value of positive academic climate (Kusurkar et al., 2013). Moreover, the doctoral student is often exposed to both internal and external goals like career mobility and social recognition in addition to satisfaction with scholarly study, which is the reason motivational aspects in doctoral education are complex (Raya, 2024).

In addition to personal factors, institutional and contextual factors are implicated in the doctoral experience, which inform persistence and engagement. Studies have shown that the intrinsic motivation is reinforced in case of relatedness, mentorship, and collaborative academic settings, and these factors provide increased sense of belonging and competence to doctoral scholars (Imtiaz et al., 2023). The other key elements of self-determination theory, autonomy and relatedness are associated with persistence in graduate school life, which points to the importance of positive academic environments to maintain motivation. Also, the reason behind pursuing doctoral studies differs depending on cultural and occupational backgrounds, including the differences in educational levels, workforce anticipations, and identity development (Wang et al., 2022). Such results highlight the importance of analyzing the motivations of doctors at both the individual and system levels instead of simplifying the motivational functions to the individual and career stimuli.

Considering these attitudes, the question of the rationale of obtaining a PhD is increasingly significant to the stakeholders of higher education. Although the common belief has traditionally focused on the prestige of the academic institution or the field of career advancement, the recent evidence has proved that the doctoral aspirations are not just based on intellectual satisfaction, professional need, social service, and the influence of mentoring. Research in these motivational areas can shed light on the conformity between expectations and the realities of doctoral education and assist institutions to create responsive academic systems that assist in persistence and well-being. Thus, this study aims to investigate the motives of PhD scholars to make a contribution to the better comprehension of doctoral engagement as well as to inform the policies and practices to increase the quality and sustainability of doctoral education.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The reasons why a person considers a PhD are multidimensional and diverse, depending on a number of personal, career, and selfless factors, and with a wide range of differences depending on disciplines and geographic location and individual description. The key motivators of the health sciences are the knowledge creation desire, career growth, and willingness to make a positive contribution to the health outcomes of society (Shekharappa & Shirahatti, 2024). As an example, a study of students in Taiwan found out that career benefits and self-development are important factors in pursuing a PhD despite their difficulty in the uncertain employment market (Horta et al., 2023). On the contrary, altruistic motives, such as a wish to do good to the community, are more prevalent than selfish ones in low-income nations, such as Mozambique, which suggests that contextual elements have a significant impact on doctoral motivations (Griffin, 2023).

The self-determination theory also expounds on the psychological side of the theory of motivation implying that autonomy and peer support are important determiners of motivation profile in students. Such profiles are low self-determined to highly self-determined, but they have a great influence on the academic success of the students (Litalien et al., 2024). Furthermore, these early causes of motivation do not only affect the process of maintaining motivation in the course of the PhD program but are also supported by other factors (such as a person's perceived autonomy and the quality of peer support) that remain constant (Bakker et al., 2024). However, there are students who are doubting the worthiness of the PhD in the current competitive job market, an indication of the necessity to review the applicability of the doctoral training in some of the disciplines.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are usually triggered together in deciding to take up doctoral degree, which both critical factors influence the effectiveness of engagement, persistence, and success of students. Long-term academic involvement and research achievement, especially in the area where individuals have to devote much of their soul to the matter, depend on intrinsic motivations, in particular, personal interest, intellectual curiosity, and desire to learn (Nikolić-Vesković, 2023; Alamri et al., 2021). Such internal drives propel students to self-realization and the ability to handle challenging subjects. Conversely, extrinsic factors, such as career progression, monetary rewards, institutional support, and social status, play a crucial role in the attraction of the students to the doctoral programs and their maintenance (Zhang et al., 2021; Alsuwailem, 2023). As an example, one could mention career opportunities and financial benefits, especially in competitive areas, in which academic jobs are a scarce resource (Alamri et al., 2021; Ismail et al., 2023). The combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations also shows that the doctoral path is complex; it differs depending on the discipline and geographic area, as well as personal backgrounds (Zhang et al., 2021; Alsuwailem, 2023). It is important to have a moderate level that allows fostering of each of these types of motivations so that doctoral students will be sustained and motivated to continue their studies.

Regarding the issue of finances, Williams et al. (2021) and Horta et al. (2016) offer good knowledge about the impact of economic limitations on doctoral education. One of the barriers identified by Williams et al. (2021) is related to the financial constraints of nursing PhD students. A large number of potential students experience challenges balancing the tuition fee and their own and family responsibilities particularly the students who have to work full time. Such financial demands are some of the causes of high dropout rates and program lags. The authors make the point that specific financial support systems, including scholarships and grants, and flexible program designs to fit working professionals are needed. On the same note, Horta et al. (2016) examine the effects of various funding schemes on the performance of PhD students in their research and career paths. They conclude that, students receiving grants have performed better in terms of research output and visibility both throughout and after the PhD period in comparison to students who are self-funded and are financed by projects. Guaranteed funding helps researchers, through students, to do more research, to publish more, and to establish more successful academic careers. The results of this study

highlight the need to resolve the issue of financial hurdles to increase PhD attainment rates and long-term educational outcomes.

Moreover, the modern situation with the training of PhDs shows inconsistencies between the academic preparation and the requirements of the job market, which requires changes in the doctoral training. The majority of PhD programs still focus on the theoretical knowledge and research specialization without paying much attention to the necessary practical skills such as collaboration, communication, and project management, which are highly appreciated by employers (Sudrajat, 2023; Noble, 2023). The problem is also exacerbated by the regional differences; in the example of Russia, the local labor markets have trouble matching the academic outputs to the economical demands, which results in an underprepared workforce. The proposed solutions involve redesigning PhD programs to include soft skills and real-world experiences and the establishment of more substantial relationships between universities and industries to make sure that the training programs are in line with the current market needs (Smith, 2023). Although there are people who claim that traditional emphasis on critical thinking and deep expertise is still useful in some fields, especially academia, flexibility in training is regarded as an important factor to become more employable in a rapidly changing job market (Noble, 2023).

PhD programs are also essential in terms of diversity and inclusion as they would create equitable academic environments and assist the underrepresented groups, especially in STEM. Recent research emphasizes holistic approaches to the admissions process because the use of standardized tests such as the GRE will be minimized due to the disparities in the results of the various applicants (Tan et al., 2024; Diaz-Elsayed et al., 2023). Mentorship programs that match the research interests with possible advisors make minority students feel a sense of belonging, which leads to the academic success of minority students (Diaz-Elsayed et al., 2023). Specific recruitment efforts like the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Minority PhD Program have been critical towards enhancing inclusiveness (Diaz-Elsayed et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the issues still exist, including the length of programs, the absence of mentorship, and unstable funding, all of which disproportionately impact minoritized populations (Cavanagh et al., 2022). To overcome these obstacles, the institutions must be held accountable and there should be better leadership by the faculty, especially in developing nations, where the inclusivity initiatives are in their infancy (Eriçok et al., 2023).

The support systems and mentorship play important roles in ensuring the provision of effective inclusive research training environments, especially to underrepresented groups. Mentoring and differentiated guidance based on culture is a critical factor to intervene in systemic issues of marginalized doctoral learners. Research demonstrates that faculty mentorship education can be quite helpful in enhancing the faculty capacity to accommodate different students, especially those who are excluded based on their ethnicity or race (Suiter et al., 2023). Trust, mutual respect and high expectations are necessary to provide effective mentorship, particularly in the dissertation phase. Mentoring support framework involves psychosocial and career guidance by Kram, which emphasizes the importance of such relationships in the completion of doctoral education (Major, 2023). Nevertheless, the cases of negative mentorship are still widespread, which makes it necessary to make some changes on the systemic level so that support systems could meet the needs of all students (Burns, 2023; Mason et al., 2024).

To conclude, the reasons to gain a PhD are influenced by a complex of the personal, professional, and societal factors, which are additionally conditioned by financial difficulties, academic preparation, and necessity of diversity and inclusion. These dynamics are very essential in formulating doctoral programs that meet the aspirations of the students and the job market requirements in addition to creating conducive environments that can support them towards success and well-being during their PhD period.

Statement of the Problem

Doctor of philosophy (Phd) has become an important element in the world because of certain research competence and specialization in the topic under discussion. It is turning into bachelor level requirement to achieve high profile position in institution of higher learning. Nonetheless it is difficult to settle on the idea of PhD pursuing because of high intellectual requirements and time limit. Traditionally, it is considered that students pursue a PhD for career advancement or academic enhancement. Yet, deeper exploration may reveal multiple motives behind pursuing PhD. These include personal growth, intellectual satisfaction, social recognition, economic factors or familial expectation. In the light of increasing demand of doctoral study it has become need of the hour to investigate motivational factors behind pursuing a PhD to keep the students on track and ensure their mental health. There may appear the mismatch between pre and post expectation or motives for pursuing a PhD. This study may help the future students to think more deeply about their motives behind starting doctoral study. Through his study, the students may become aware of difficulties and challenges faced by PhD students which affect their motivation level like extended timelines, financial burdens, emotional stress, high expectations, limited academic exposure etc. This gap between expectations and outcomes may contribute to high attrition rates, psychological burnout, or dissatisfaction with the academic journey.

Significance of the Study

The study is of great importance to different stakeholders such as students, universities, policymakers, and employers. Fundamentally, this study could be useful in ensuring that students are on track and not subjected to unwanted stress in the process of PhD. Moreover, the wisdom can be the basis of creating and presenting more diversified content. The research is needed to tackle the issues in the field of higher education. The issues such as elevated dropout rates, mental health disorders, disparities between theory and practice and increased disconnect between doctoral training and career performance. This study can help improve academic conditions and make them more supportive by studying the underlying reasons why a student used to pursue a PhD and aligning it to the expectations and future goals of the students.

The results of this study can be relevant to the students. They have an opportunity to reconsider their motive of having a PhD and create a more diversified motive to them. Their executive authority can be boosted following the examination of the results of this research. The university and the academic institutions can benefit by developing their curriculum and learning experiences to suit the demands and expectations of the students.

As a policy, this study is relevant to government institutions and funding agencies in the field of higher education. The policymakers can use the results to develop policies that facilitate meaningful doctoral education as well as support mental well-being and career preparedness. This study will also benefit employers involved and out of the academia. Since PhD graduates are progressively taking up non-academic positions, it is possible to learn more about their motivation and career goals to allow employers to create more comprehensive employment approaches to acknowledge the importance of advanced research skills. Moreover, this paper can emphasize the ways in which doctoral programs should improve to equip students with a wider range of skills to better fit the industry demands, overcome the academic knowledge and industry expectations disjunction.

Overall, the paper can be viewed as part of the wider discussion regarding the enhancement of doctoral education through addressing the personal, social, and professional qualities that influence an individual to decide to attain a PhD. Its results can be used to create more effective and student-focused programs that will lead to health benefits, academic success, and the ability of graduates to work in a rapidly changing world. This study can assist students, institutions and the society at large to find solutions to the challenges

and align the expectations with the realities to enjoy a more sustainable and impactful doctoral education system.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to understand motives behind pursuing a PhD by scholars. Since it is considered one of the most demanding degrees in every field of education and it takes lots of time and efforts, so it may prove ideal for the readers to know about the motive behind pursuing this degree. Different research questions inquiring the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, role of mentorship, place of personal interest or passion, and challenges in maintaining motivation throughout PhD journey were the part of this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative investigations are used to conduct a thorough study of the underlying facts of a phenomenon. The goal of qualitative research is to explore and comprehend people's meanings, experiences, and views. Interviews, focus groups, and observations are used to collect detailed, non-numerical data. This approach is especially useful for researching complex issues in the social sciences, education, and health.

Population is the total number of people or entities in a certain region or category. In research, it refers to the total group of participants who have similar features and from whom samples may be taken for study. Target population of the study in hand included all PhD scholars enrolling in 2020 or onward at the University of Punjab and University of Okara, regardless of their department.

Sample of this quantitative study consists of 15 PhD scholars which were selected from both universities conveniently. A sample is a subset of individuals or entities selected from a larger population for the purpose of research. It represents the population and is used to make inferences about the whole. Sampling methods ensure that the sample is representative, allowing for accurate and generalizable study results. For this qualitative study, Convenient sampling techniques is employed to have easily access to the participants. This non-probability technique is used when there are limitations of time and resources.

An open-ended questionnaire was developed by the researcher to seek the motives behind pursuing PhD. Related areas were explored from literature review and a comprehensive open-ended questionnaire was developed covering the constructs like intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, place of mentorship and advice, and role of self-interest or passion. For validation of the instrument, two faculty members from a renowned university, having sound experience in assessment and instrument development, were selected. The instrument was revised as instructed by the reviewers. After this, three mock responses were recorded to have a pilot testing of the instrument. The final draft of questionnaire having main and probing questions was used to collect data from selected sample.

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

The researcher converted open-ended questionnaire into Google form to have easily access to the participants and offer ease in their available time to respond the questions. Open-ended questions were arranged for the participants to share comprehensive responses about their experiences to pursue PhD in their relevant field of study. The responses were recorded in Google form and excel sheet was downloaded for analysis.

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within data. It is a flexible approach that provides a rich, detailed, and complex account of data. The procedure includes familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report. Since the data was collected through Google form, therefore the researcher first downloaded excel sheet of the responses and then got familiarization with data. After that codes were underlined. The similar codes were grouped under major headings. In this way, relevant themes, sub-themes and nodes were emerged from the data for interpretation.

Interpretation of the Data

Thematic analysis procedure was adopted to have an in-depth overview of the data. Themes emerged from the data included intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for pursuing PhD, influence of mentorship and guidance, role of financial considerations, challenges encountered during PhD journey, evolving motivations over the course of the PhD and PhD as career aspirations and professional goal. Below is given a brief description of the emerged-themes.

Theme 1: Intrinsic Motivations for Pursuing a Ph.D.

Intrinsic motivation is a type of motivation which derives an individual to achieve the goal for pleasure and inner satisfaction. In the current phenomena majority of respondents favored intrinsic motivation as a source of pursuing their PhD programme. Personal interest, passion and dedication were the key elements in deciding to opt their future in PhD, as stated by T2 and T4.

Personal interest is the only factor that heavily matters...your interest brings you out of the blue phase as you will always find a reason to get engaged (T2).

Approximately 90% of the motivation behind such a commitment is your personal interest than external factors...it is ultimately personal passion and dedication to the subject that sustain the long-term effort required to complete a Ph.D. program (T4).

This indicates the importance of a genuine desire for knowledge in driving the pursuit of a doctorate. Similarly, another respondent T8 considered it as long-term commitment for starting the journey of PhD.

Passion for the subject matter plays a central role in deciding to pursue a Ph.D. as it drives long-term commitment, perseverance, and motivation needed to complete the intense research and challenge (T8).

Therefore it may be concluded here that intrinsic motivation was one of the most influencing factor in pursuing a PhD as it give us realistic push towards our goal. By creating commitment and motivation our personal interests compel us to achieve our destinations.

Theme 2: Extrinsic Motivations Linked to Career Advancement

Despite of intrinsic motivation like personal interest, passion, dedication and commitment, extrinsic motivational factors cannot also be denied for pushing an individual for deciding such long-term journey. Extrinsic motivation is a type of drive which offers some rewards in return of doing the task successfully. About half of the respondents like T1, T13 and T6 favored extrinsic motivational factors like financial benefits, reasonable job, carrier advancement and social recognition after getting the degree of doctorate.

Financial benefits were also there. I was paid 5000 allowance after getting the degree of Ph.D. Being an expert in itself is a motive to opt for this degree (T1).

Securing the best possible job was the extrinsic motivation for me (T13).

A desired career path can strongly influence the decision to pursue a Ph.D. if the goal is to work in academia, research, or highly specialized fields (T6).

Extrinsic motivation like financial benefits also attracts the aspirants to opt PhD programme from a well-known institution. Some respondents also pointed out this element as their motive behind pursuing a PhD.

Financial aspect is the most important in the long journey of Ph.D. If financial support not available then I may never be able to start Ph.D. (T12).

The critical role of financial support in determining the feasibility of pursuing advanced studies, particularly at the Ph.D. level cannot be ignored (T4).

Financial support such as scholarships, grants, and fellowship is often crucial in the decision to pursue a Ph.D. as it helps reduce the financial burden (T8).

Here, to sum up, it may be concluded that in addition with personal interests, external factors like financial benefits, career growth, social recognition and personality development are also influencing factors those may urge an educator to start the journey of PhD. These factors help a scholar to keep him/herself steadfast in facing hurdles during pursuing a PhD.

Theme 3: Influence of Mentorship and Guidance

It is always ideal to consult with their mentor, teachers and guide before deciding a big project. The decision about admission in doctorate programme is also one of the hard decisions made by the students. It is because of the time, resources and commitment needed for the successful completion of the degree. That's why majority of the respondents considered it essential to have expert opinion from their mentor, teachers and guide, as stated by T14.

Throughout my MPhil and B.Ed. studies, Dr. Khalid (Imaginary name) has been an instrumental figure in my academic development. His consistent encouragement and guidance have played a pivotal role in motivating me to pursue advanced studies (T14).

In the same way, another participants like T7 and T10 also advocated the role of guidance from mentor in deciding huge task. They were of the view that insight from mentor proves benchmark for the student. Their experiences foresee the commitment and intellectual power of students before advising them for getting admission in some high demanding programmes.

Mentors can help clarify how a Ph.D. fits into an individual's long-term career goals. Experienced professionals can provide insights into whether advanced research training is truly necessary for reaching those goals (T7).

Mentorship and advice from others can significantly influence the decision to start a Ph.D. Mentors can provide guidance, support, and insights into the academic journey (T10).

Therefore, mentorship helps a scholar to seek guidance in the time of need. He/she being an experienced person may keep the scholar active in getting his/her goal and completing the hectic research work without delay. Mentor plays the role of an authority to solve the queries of scholars.

Theme 4: Career Aspirations and Professional Goals

The data revealed another aspect of pursuing a PhD instead of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, which is professional need and career aspiration. A major part of respondents were of the view that pursuit of a Ph.D. could be closely tied to specific career objectives. Professional requirements can drive individuals towards doctoral studies, as stated by T1, T7 and T10. The role of academic career pathways in motivating the pursuit of a doctorate cannot be ignored.

I wish to serve the last years of my service in any university, and to do that, I have to get this degree (T1).

If becoming a professor, researcher, or expert in your area of interest, it requires advanced qualifications and deep expertise, a Ph.D. becomes a necessary step (T7).

If someone aims to become a professor or researcher, a Ph.D. is often a requirement (T10).

This shows that professional advancement is the right and wish of every one and scholars having Mphil degree pursue to have PhD for advancement in their profession. Person having PhD degree may fulfill the basic requirements and eligibility criteria of higher education institutions.

Theme 5: Evolving Motivations over the Course of the Ph.D.

On asking the variation in extent of motivation, majority of respondents agree with this fact that they all have motivation shift throughout their journey of PhD. The motivation shift was influenced by the challenges and opportunities they encountered. T12 and T8 pointed out the same things as that of T10.

There have been ups and downs regarding motivation levels. The motivation goes to zero at some time, but then, when you see you are very close to the finishing line, this keeps you driving (T12).

Yes, my motivation shifted from pure passion for research to a focus on career advancement and completion driven by the challenges and demands of the Ph.D. journey (T8).

Motivations evolve throughout Ph.D. programs. Initially, they may be driven by a strong passion...However, as they encounter challenges, their motivations may shift (T10).

Thus the motivation level of scholars vary during their journey of PhD. Sometimes they become depressed, and on the other moment they may have some spark and started again. In PhD, every stage like course work, exams, research proposals, seminars, presentations and research thesis etc. is challenging. Teachers, mentors and fellow students are sources of motivation for students.

Theme 6: Challenges Encountered During the Ph.D. Journey

The journey of doctorate is not exception from challenge. The data revealed that PhD students have to face lots of challenges during their study. These challenges vary from person to person and strength also has diversity in different persons at the same time and position. The data emerged challenges like academic pressure, financial constraints, teacher-student relationship etc. maintaining the motivation level throughout this programme is another challenge stated by T6, T8 and T10.

Challenges like research pressure, funding issues, or changing career aspirations can cause a shift in priorities, leading to a stronger focus on completing the Ph.D. for professional reasons rather than purely academic passion (T6).

The biggest challenges in maintaining motivation throughout my Ph.D. journey have been balancing the pressure of prolonged research with personal life demands (T8).

One of the biggest challenges for me is maintaining motivation throughout the studies. The long hours, isolation, and constant pressure to produce high-quality research can take a toll on mental and emotional well-being (T10).

In short, different challenges like lack of funds, research pressure, priorities shift, lack of motivation and professional constrains are also there to stop the ways of the scholars. However, continuous efforts and commitment help scholars to meet the challenges and reach the destination with success. PhD is considered one of the most demanding degrees at university level. A bright future may be ensured after having this as it makes the researchers skillful and excellent in profession.

DISCUSSION

The results of this paper prove that the choice of studying a PhD is predetermined by the intricate and dynamic combination of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic factors, mentorship, and situational difficulties. As expected in previous studies, intrinsic motivation, intellectual interest, desire to know, and adherence to the research were found to be the most resilient factors that motivated doctoral engagement. Participants kept on reiterating that psychological strength and endurance in the long and strenuous PhD process was facilitated by personal interest and passion in the discipline. This result is associated with the self-determination theory, which states that interest-based and personally meaningful autonomy is essential to long-term involvement and well-being in a complicated learning setting (Kusurkar et al., 2013; Litalien et al., 2024). The same findings have been achieved in global research on the topic, pointing to the fact that intrinsic motivation relates closely to doctoral persistence and research productivity (Nikolić-Vesković, 2023; Imtiaz et al., 2023).

Simultaneously, the research proves that extrinsic motivations are still an important and factual complement in the decision-making of the doctoral level. Among the most important reasons, which were mentioned more often, were career promotion, financial stability, institutional acknowledgment, and professional security, especially among those who are already institutionalized in professional positions. The results reiterate previous studies indicating that doctoral education is fast becoming a strategic investment to gain access to an academic or special professional role in competitive labor markets (Horta et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). Monetary rewards, including scholarships and allowances, were found to be serious determinants that allow entering a doctoral degree, which supports the previous findings that fund access is a strong predictor of doctoral enrollments, advancements, and completion (Williams et al., 2021; Horta et al., 2016). The interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors observed in this paper argues in favor of the point that doctoral motivation is not dichotomous but is rather multidimensional and situational (Alsuwailem, 2023; Wang et al., 2022).

PhD is considered the highest level of academic qualification moreover, academic guidance and mentorship were found as one of the crucial mediating variables in the development of doctoral aspirations and motivation maintenance. The respondents also noted that support and positive counseling by supervisors and senior academics was a significant factor that influenced their decision to have a doctorate and in coping with the messiness of doctoral life. This result supports the available literature that focuses on mentorship as one of the key pillars of doctoral success, especially in elucidating career paths, addressing expectations,

and psychosocial support (Major, 2023; Suiter et al., 2023). The research paper also supports the questions expressed in previous studies that uncertainty and stress during doctoral training can be aggravated by unequal or insufficient mentorship, which need to be organized and responsible (Burns, 2023; Mason et al., 2024).

The other significant contribution that was made by this study is the realization that the motivation of doctors is not a static phenomenon. Individuals reported that their motivation changed with time, and individuals shifted toward strategies of goal completion rather than engagement with curiosity as academic, financial, and personal needs increased. The presented evolution of motivation is consistent with the existing literature that suggests those long doctoral durations, research failures; work-life balance issues may redefine the priorities and coping strategies of students (Bakker et al., 2024; Raya, 2024). The mentioned difficulties, such as financial stress, isolation, academic burnout, and mental exhaustion, are symptomatic of the evidence on doctoral attrition risks and psychological vulnerability across the globe (Cavanagh et al., 2022; Smith, 2023).

On the whole, the results support the assertion that the issue of doctoral engagement cannot be adequately explained by personal motivation but should be put in a more comprehensive context of institutional, economical, and cultural facts. The findings validate the need to have more dynamic doctoral programs that would incorporate financial assistance, quality of mentorship, career readiness and well-being programs to maintain motivation and lessen attrition. This study also contributes to the body of literature in illustrating lived experiences of PhD scholars in a developing-country setting by showing that the motives of doctoral students vary contextually and require context-wide assistance in addition to individual desire.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that the motivations behind a PhD degree are a complex and dynamic combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of research and career, financial and professional benefits. Although deep interest and intellectual fascination are the rudiments of motivation, external influences (quality of mentorship, access to funding, career goals) play a strong role in determining whether to join doctoral programs as well as the capacity to withstand the challenges. Tough PhD is a popular study but it is continuously losing its worth. Conclusively it is perceived that doctoral motivation is not permanent but changes according to the academic needs and requirements, personal factors, and organizational limits. As these insights suggest, doctoral environments should be facilitated, adequately funded, and mentorship-oriented to recognize the dynamism of the motivation. Institutional practices can be aligned with the lived experiences of doctoral scholars to improve persistence and well-being of doctoral education and increase its overall effectiveness. The academician is still in the quest PhD keep continues the worth in the future or bit loosing or reshaping in another form.

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