Exploring Doctoral Students' Lived Experiences While Selecting Research Topic: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of doctoral students' while selecting the research topic. Phenomenological design of qualitative research was employed to explore doctoral students' experiences. Participants for the study were selected using purposive sampling. Ten PhD students, who were working on the selection of their research topics in the field of information management, education and business were selected to be a part of the study. Interview protocol and guideline was developed and data was collected through individual interviews following ethical considerations. The data was recorded with the consent of participants and then transcribed carefully to perform analysis. Before analysis transcribed file was shared with participants to make sure the researcher captured the essence of their responses and no misinterpretations has been done. After this thematic analysis was done to analyze the data and as a result five themes were emerged i.e. experience regarding selection of topic, supervisor's role, strategies toward selection of topic, researcher's belief and problems in selection of topic. The findings of the study revealed that according to doctoral students, selection of topic is not an easy task it needs proper support of supervisor, understanding of variables, selection of topic in their

area of interest. Further findings elaborated the problems doctoral students faced during the selection of research topic. The problems include: time management, lack of familiarity with variables and identifying research gap. Based on the findings, the researcher suggested that doctoral students need training during course work on how they can select novel and significant research topics. They also need assistance on how to overcome problems they face during research topic selection because in the long run addressing these issues will improve the quality of research itself. Despite the doctoral students finding of the study will provide new direction for further studies and other disciplines.

Keywords: Topic selection, Doctoral students, phenomenological study,

Introduction

Selection of the significant research topic is essential element in the successful completion of doctoral degree. Doctoral students disbursed a lot of time and energy for topic selection, even occasionally it shows like phobia. There are many techniques that students used for this purpose including visiting library, discussing with their seniors and teachers for guidance. Research is documented as "systematic and innovative process that assumed to enhance the knowledge". It involves in collecting, shaping and analyzing information for the sake of understanding the certain phenomena or research problem. Similarly, when doctoral students are selecting research topic they have an opportunity to expand their understanding, writing, and analysis of ideas and dissemination of critical knowledge (Sellahewa & Samarasinghe, 2021). However, common practices among students are selection of variables that have been already researched duplicate research themes and preferably students select that research topic that already investigated internationally or nationally to avoid the difficult process of topic selection. The doctoral students even face difficulties in finding research group and they wish institutions or supervisors provide more guidance and structured system. These practices are common because students lack assistance and relevant skills to select research topic. That is why, it is essential to discourage such practices in research that affect the selection of novel and worthy topics (Gul et al., 2021).

It is generally acknowledged that selecting and defining a topic for Ph.D. research is a crucial and difficult process (Malisiovas, 2010). Any research project is initially based on the formulation of the research problem/topic which has a significant influence on the outcomes of a

research project and other subsequent phases. Thus, the selection of an appropriate topic is crucial for both the field of the study and the researcher. It shows the researcher's capability to conduct independent study for the purpose of increasing the body of knowledge in the specific field of study. The researcher needs certain cognitive abilities in order to formulate a research topic, otherwise, they would likely feel uneasy and worried when writing their research proposals, which is a requirement for their degree. The researchers face difficult situations in formulating appropriate research topics and areas to investigate and both supervisors and researchers must put forth a tremendous amount of time, energy, and stress to select topics are worthy of time, efforts and knowledge (Ameen et al., 2018). When they have to prepare a research proposal, it is one of the consistent issues that doctorate students encounter (Loulanski, 2009).

Although the student's experiential background and general concepts of contribution to the field are highlighted, there isn't much guidance on how to choose a research topic. Even those doctoral students don't have a research focus and do not have the background necessary to build a focused area of study within a larger research field.

Many doctoral students start their research project by proposing a solution to a problem before they have given the problem enough thought or, in some cases before they even have a clearly stated problem. This is similar to how many inexperienced researchers formulate complex problems; they almost immediately concentrate on the solution while omitting the essential processes involved in describing the issue and evaluating the options. This is a challenge because many students are not prepared to participate in the necessary actions to effectively choose a research topic based on a specified problem. Therefore, the researcher should mentally prepare to completely engage in the research process before choosing a good study topic, the development process, and exploration that can be difficult for many in-experienced doctoral students (Luse et al., 2012).

Academics and university students have comprehensive understanding and awareness of the value of research. Nevertheless, the general public's comprehension of the value of conducting research is a matter of debate. In such a situation, university students can make a greater contribution to the public dissemination of these study findings. First and foremost, educators should encourage students to conduct research effectively and efficiently. The majority of intellectuals come from universities all over the world, and if they become reluctant or demotivated

to pursue their research interests, the entire process may be negatively impacted. According to the literature review studies that investigate doctoral students' experiences with the formulation of research topic is very limited (Sellahewa & Samarasinghe, 2021).

Nowadays a large number of students are applying for admission to advanced research programs (M.Phil/Ph.D.) in public and private universities in Pakistan as a result of the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) establishment. The majority of inexperienced researchers are unaware of the value of research proposals/topics in academic settings. The merit of a research endeavor is determined by the quality and distinctiveness of the study idea. A research proposal's/research topic's main objective is to encourage the research committee and supervisor that the student is capable of conducting a worthwhile study in combination with their work plan. Additionally, the preliminary reading familiarizes potential beginner researchers with the field and aids in their understanding of the breadth and complexity of the study (Iqbal et al., 2019). Therefore, the present study is conducted to explore doctoral students' lived experiences related to the formulation of research topics in the different fields.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:
1. To explore doctoral student's lived experiences about selection of topic
2. To know how doctoral students, select research topic
3. To explore factors that influence selection of topic

Research Questions

To address research objectives following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the lived experiences of doctoral students while selecting a research topic?
2. How did doctoral students select their topic?
3. What are the factors that influence the selection of a topic?

Literature Review

A basic challenge faced by doctoral students in their research work is the selection of topics in their field. Being on the edge between academic and practical life, the majority of students at this stage are quite ambitious. Many students struggle with choosing their topic or identifying their

true areas of interest. The improper thesis topic choice could put students in a position where they unable to meet the standards of a significant thesis compromise the quality of their research work. The selection of a significant research topic requires considerable intellectual effort and students rarely study books or articles to understand research critically. They pick up on the conversation and adopt it as their own. They think like ordinary people because it takes time, effort, and energy to think like a researcher (Iqbal et al., 2019). The findings show that a variety of factors such as including personal experience and the field of specialization of the supervisor have a significant impact on students when choosing a research topic. Additionally, the gender-based mean difference was discovered in the variables of personal experience and data accessibility. It also reported that students pursuing master's degrees and doctoral degrees did not differ in their study levels (Gul et al., 2021).

Malisiovas (2010) stated that doctoral students face difficulties in communication between supervisors and students, planning and structuring Ph.D. research, and the feasibility of carrying out one's ideal study. Many inexperienced researchers are more likely to jump into the selection of the research problem. With such type of practice, the researcher may not fully comprehend the topic, which could lead to a failure to detect underlying problems that frame the context of the issue (Luse et al., 2012). Further, Olalere et al. (2014) found that doctoral student topic selection is influenced by core courses, and network factors like supervisors' professional experience, life experience, supervisors' research agenda and practical experience. Moreover, factors that influence the conduction of research and selection of topics as access to data, proficiency in the language, access to data sources, time management, poor guidance from supervisors, lack of proper knowledge and access to correct data (Sellahewa & Samarasinghe, 2021; Verostek et al., 2024).

Head and Eisenberg (2010) conducted a survey that reported that 84% of the students considered that getting started was the hardest aspect of the course-related research process. The results also showed that according to 66% of participants the selection of topic is a very challenging task. Similar findings were reported by Shahid and Shahzad (2013) that during the process of topic selection students face several problems due to cultural and environmental diversity. The study recommended some measures to adopt when choosing a research topic i.e. one of the finest places to find a study topic, for instance, is to present at or participate in conferences related to the subject, reading research articles in the relevant field can also be helpful in identifying the topic of a study

(Todd, 2004). For experts, regular classroom experiences and observations can sometimes be a basis for choosing a research topic (Celia, 2008). Similarly, the choice of study topic for the dissertation is influenced by the time constraints, accessibility of research resources, and results of past studies (Yalcn et al., 2016).

A comprehensive literature analysis was done in order to compile a long list of variables that affect the choice of research topics. The factors discovered by the literature review are briefly described below; First sensation of ease: the availability of reference resources should be considered while selecting a thesis or dissertation research topic. This suggests that students must first determine if they can locate enough data on topics that are closely related to support their study objectives. Students must be aware of prior research that has been done in order to uncover knowledge gaps in their respective fields and produce something original or unique. Students will be able to fill up these gaps if they understand how to do so adequately (Peters, 1997). Along the way, students should complete the necessary coursework and work on research papers during coursework that could ultimately serve as crucial parts of building their research skills that will help them later in their thesis or dissertation. Second the area for supervisor: Accepting a topic that recommended by the research supervisor can make life easier for students because they will have the support of their supervisors directly and will not have to spend as much time looking for the right topic. The more closely a student's research relates to their supervisor's area of expertise, the more useful their recommendations will be to the student. Research students who keep in touch and close to their supervisors typically finished earlier than independent students (Churchill, & Sanders, 2007).

Thirdly, future development: The research study's future possibilities or significance are one of the most important considerations when choosing a research topic. The choice of topic for doctorate students who enrolled in doctoral studies for professional and career improvement is in line with their overarching goal. A study topic's potential for expansion in the coming years has a significant role in the decision-making process (Oplatka, 2009). Fourthly, the researcher keeps in mind creativity whether his/her topic contributes to the problem-solving or presents a new framework sometimes serves as a factor that influences the selection of a research topic. The necessity to evaluate the current trend of their field of study is another factor that researchers believe is crucial while planning their investigations. Instead of importing economic conceptions,

research should look at local education policies, how they affect school leadership, and how they are put into practice (Karada, 2009a). The fifth factor that affect the selection of the topic is the literature review because academic researchers use previous literature to support their topic and develop a theoretical framework and conceptual framework (Olalere et al., 2014). Research experts advise students to choose a topic that they are knowledgeable about or one in which they have a deep interest and have had enough time to become specialists (Leech & Leech, 2024).
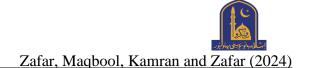
Research Method

The current study falls under interpretive paradigm. Research under interpretive paradigm involves detailed understanding of a particular subject or phenomenon constant interactions and observation rather than hypothesis testing. Interpretive paradigm explores the reality by participants understanding, experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2009). This paradigm believes that individuals create their own understandings as interact in environment.

To explore the experiences of doctoral students the researcher employed phenomenological research design. This design involves to report the common meaning of lived experiences of different individuals. Phenomenological studies emphasis on unfolding what all participants of the study have in (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The current study employed phenomenological research design because it explored the doctoral student's lived experiences as a phenomenon while they are working in the field and selecting research topic for their PhD research.

Population and sampling

For this study PhD scholars were considered from different disciplines as population of the study they enrolled in public sector university where PhD offered. The selection of the participants was made on the bases of PhD; students they are working on selection of topic and those considered as a Phenomenon. University departments offering PhD and consist of different amount of PhD scholars and HEC approved supervisors. Ten PhD scholars selected as participants of the study from both public and private universities. To select the participants purposive sampling were employed and those scholars considered they supposed to provide holistic views on topic selection process**.**

Table.1. Participants Demographics

Sr#	Level	Gender	University	Academic Year	Areas
1	PhD Scholar	Male	Public	2nd year	Educational Administration
2	PhD Scholar	Male	Public	3rd year	Information Management
3	PhD Scholar	Female	Private	3rd year	Educational Administration
4	PhD Scholar	Male	Public	2nd year	Assessment & Measurement
5	PhD Scholar	Female	Private	4th year	Educational Psychology
6	PhD Scholar	Male	Public	2nd year	Information Management
7	PhD Scholar	Female	Private	3rd year	Business Management
8	PhD Scholar	Male	Public	3rd year	Business Management
9	PhD Scholar	Female	Private	3rd year	Curriculum Development
10	PhD Scholar	Female	Public	2nd year	Information Management

Data Collection and analysis

Data will collect one to one interview trough semi-structured interview guide. After the collection of data interviews were transcribed carefully for the reliability and accuracy of data. After transcribing interviews thematic analysis were performed to gain insights on doctoral students' reflection while they were working on selection of research topic.

Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

For the purpose of data collection one to one individual interviews were conducted by the researcher. All ethical considerations were followed such as researcher provide the consent form by using that respondents show their willingness to participate in the current study. After that researcher brief participants about the purpose of the study, worth their participation and give surety about confidentiality of their responses. Moreover, researcher assured that about anonymity and privacy to make the doctoral student comfortable in sharing their experiences related to the selection of topic. When researcher developed rapport with participants, he conducted interviews and recorded the responses with the permission of respondents, the time period of each interview ranged between about to one hour.

After the collection of data researcher transcribe all interviews and ensure the trustworthiness by transferability, dependability, credibility and confirmability. To ensure the trustworthiness researcher used some strategy that mentioned below in table:

Table.2. Trustworthiness Chart

Criteria	Strategies	Explanation/ How to Use Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness
Transferability	Thick Description	Conducted one to one interview and further to ensure trustworthiness conducted follow-up interviews.
Dependability	Multiple sources of Data	Semi-Structure interviews/ informal discussion about selection of topic/techniques/supervisors' feedback and guidelines.
Credibility	Member Checks	Sent/allow to read interview transcripts to participants to ensure accuracy of their narratives.
Confirmability	Reflexivity	Researcher set aside his/her experiences or thoughts at the time of interview, transcription as much he/she can.

Findings

The purpose of the study was to explore doctoral students' reflections about selection of topic for a research project and their thesis. Participants of the study were doctoral students of different fields to know how they experience these phenomena during selection of topic. To explore reflections of doctoral students', individual interviews were conducted and five themes were emerged i.e. experience regarding selection of topic, supervisor's role, strategies toward selection of topic, researcher's belief and problems in selection of topic.

Table.3. Themes and Major Statements of the Participants

Themes	Statements
Experience Regarding Selection of Topic	"*selecting a topic for research is very difficult and challenging job because it is the initial stage for any research. Doctoral students always encounter confusions*

	while selecting research topic according to their interest even face some hurdles like lack of time as well as lack of irrelevant interest area".
Supervisor's Role	*"in a research-based degree program supervisor plays indispensable role who ensure the provision of encouragement, support, guidance and quality…. in all that a research supervisor critically affect doctoral students' performance by his/her feedback on work and supervisor's communication with doctoral students".*
Strategies Toward Selection of Topic	*"I read lot of literature related to the area of my interest, consulted different sources like different databases of HEC Digital Library, online books, journals and articles then select the variables of my study".* "*Pick a topic that related to your interest, chose that area that fascinated you and also discuss with friends about your idea It might be help you to select topic and gathering some different insights, must consult or discuss with supervisor for advice gain maximum understanding about selected variables when you are more knowledgeable about your issue, the research process is more relevant".*
Researcher's Belief	"persistence *behind the literature review at the time of literature review is gain insight about existing body of knowledge in the certain field of study. At the time of topic selection, we need extensive literature review even all supervisors also suggest that find out new variables by studying journals what type of researches are publishing".*

Problems in Selection of Topic	*"I got into a number of issues. In Pakistani culture, there is no suitable system that direct the students in their research process. Find out research gap is not an informal activity; have in-depth understanding the phenomena is more crucial. These gaps must be supported by adequate proof from a reputable journal or body of available literature material".*

Experience Regarding Selection of Topic

Participants of the study shared their experiences that topic selection is not an easy task. At the time of data collection, they were not clear about the research area they wanted to work on and the reason is that they face lot of challenges while selecting topic. First, they went with a topic but supervisor rejected that because that particular topic they want to do research on was not the area of their supervisor. Supervisor guided them to search and read more literature and then come up with more ideas on dimension related to his/her area of expertise. Then browsed different search engines and found more literature.

Such as doctoral student reported that "*selecting a topic for research is very difficult and challenging job because it is the initial stage for any research. Doctoral students always encounter confusions while selecting research topic according to their interest even face some hurdles like lack of time as well as lack of irrelevant interest area".*

Doctoral students should have the autonomy towards selection research variables/topic that relevant to their area of specialization and interest. But research trends in Pakistan leads to different factors that can affect this practice such as limited time, area of supervisor, lack of resources, social issues, and facilities available inside the university due to all of these hurdles the scholars mostly compromise their interests. Most of the supervisors force their doctoral students to select research problem according to his/her interest. But if the student's interest not match with supervisor expertise/interest then they may not have such autonomy towards selection. So, students need to select such variables that match with the supervisor's area of interest because supervisors have more expertise as compared to the students. But student should select the supervisor who

have the relevant expertise to student's interest and also encourage the choice of their students as well.

Supervisor's Role

The supervisor is a person who continuously supporting and guiding student's during doctoral research work. Guidance of any research supervisor is demonstrated through the behavior of the supervisee and communication with each other as supervisors and doctoral students.

A participant of the study stated that "*in a research-based degree program supervisor plays indispensable role who ensure the provision of encouragement, support, guidance and quality…. in all that a research supervisor critically affect doctoral students' performance by his/her feedback on work and supervisor's communication with doctoral students*".

During their research while students are working with passion and commitment they improve their quality of work as well as inspire his/her supervisor. After observing student's commitment and dedication supervisor are always ready to guide and support their doctoral students. Without the guidance doctoral students cannot select researchable topic, design methodology, appropriate analysis and publications as well. Supervisors also analyzing even their students are meeting academic and university benchmarks, in all that without supervisor any doctoral students cannot complete his/her degree or research because supervisors are basic pillars they provide roots and grounds to compete all encounter process of research in including selection of topic.

 Strategies Toward Selection of Topic

Participants of the study described that they consulted lots of databases to review literature in order to identify the research gap, before selecting a research topic. After consulted with different sources to find out maximum literature related on my area of interest I selected a topic**.** As one of the participants shared *"I read lot of literature related to the area of my interest, consulted different sources like different databases of HEC Digital Library, online books, journals and articles then select the variables of my study"*.

Prior to moving forward with the study and selection of topic, researchers need to pay attention to a few things. Since choosing a topic is initial phase in any research project, even scope of any research should base on whether it is relevant/researchable and significant. The field or area

on which researcher going to work must align with the interest of the researcher, the selection of topic should be free from pressure, and the researcher must gain thoughtful understanding about the topic and idea that is going to be investigate. The researchers might seek assistance from a mentor/supervisor with knowledge in the field if they are having trouble choosing an appropriate research topic. First difficulty is picking an intriguing topic for your research.

A doctoral student advised some strategies "*Pick a topic that is related to your interest, chose area that fascinated you and also discuss with friends about your idea It might help you to select topic and provide different insights, must consult or discuss with supervisor for advice, gain maximum understanding of selected variables when you are more knowledgeable about your issue, the research process is more relevant*".

Other participants also shared they studied extensive literature, used background reading to assist in selection of topic and then define the parameters related to selected topic. Prior conducted studies can help the research in understanding topic and its scope that would be practicable. If your topic is too broad, you will find too much information and not be able to focus and think critically as who, what, when, where and why questions.

Researcher's Belief

Doctoral students believe that they must pay attention to a few things before moving on to the selection of research topic. Doctoral students' interest about selection of topic must aligned with supervisor's area of specialization, must discuss with supervisors because they know that about new trends and educational problems that need to be addressed and which topic is more researchable in certain field or social context.

Moreover, respondents of the study believed that review of the related literature is a provision of understating about undertaken subject and discussion how literature investigated that topic in local and international context. Further, literature review provides a written report, explain relationship between different variables that really needed to selection, formulation of topic and guide about research methods by using which research design certain topic will be investigated.

One of the doctoral students suggest that "persistence *behind the literature review at the time of literature review helps gain insight about existing body of knowledge in the certain field of study. At the time of topic selection, we need extensive literature review even all supervisors*

suggest that find out new variables by exploring journals and what type of researches are publishing.

Being a doctoral student demands extensive readings that provide correct direction towards selection of variables. In the current research culture scholars need to expand their vision and develop basic understanding about the process of good selection of topic. When doctoral students have just surface knowledge about certain field of study they face many problems and also feel very difficulties to get a researchable topic.

Problems in Selection of Topic

Participant of the study shared that the selection of a study topic can be influenced by a number of things. It goes without saying that a researcher will be more determined to explore a subject they are interested in. New research topics will develop as a result of social changes due to reasons including personal interest, theoretical perspective, political opinions, opportunity, funding influence selection of topic critically. One important reason is that with the passage of time the social order has been changed that emerge new cultures, social demands and educational requirements. Such as new world order introduced virtual gaming, quality assurance in education, information management and business management quality for sustainability and IT integration. But reason is that most of the new evolved trends still not fit in Pakistani context and we couldn't work on it properly.

> While deciding on a suitable research topic, A participant responded that *"I got into a number of issues. In Pakistani culture, there is no suitable system that direct the students in their research process. Find out research gap is not an informal activity; have in-depth understanding the phenomena is more crucial. These gaps must be supported by adequate proof from a reputable journal or body of available literature material".*

Other doctoral students remarked that therefore, it demands a lot of effort, rigorous study, and cooperation from scholars and supervisor in the research field. *To find research gaps is also a problem that required evaluation of the literature. In identifying gap further there is problem as research gap identified but that had not yet been addressed by previous studies*. In this way lack of literature on selected topic also cause problems for researcher. Sometimes researcher come across previously published research that needs to be updated and was deemed to have a research gap. Applying what I've learned, I'll gather all the pertinent information on my research topic, and

then I'll use it to pinpoint the research problem. I was making use of the available resources so I could include it in my problem description. The time limit is still another big obstacle. However, it needs an excessive hard work from the side of doctoral students also requires conscious participation in the particular field of study.

A comprehensive review of related literature leads to strong rationale and gap of any research study. Sometimes, doctoral students select those variables, on which literature does not show any research gap. Occasionally, doctoral students find some researches in existing body of knowledge that has been conducted many years before and students need to address recent studies or issues, which is considered a significant research gap. Furthermore, application of new learned things, collect all the important data related to research area is another difficult task. Doctoral students take advantage by that resources around them but significant challenge is the time constraint that also an issue that have to be focused by students.

Discussion

The results of the study revealed that there are many factors that affect the selection of topic. Some factors support in selection of topic and some create hurdles as well. The findings of the study are discussed in the light of literature as follows

Doctoral students described that selection of topic is very difficult task as they are well aware it is initial stage and sometimes they never know how to select researchable topic. Mostly they interested in that research area that not the area of supervisor, sometimes doctoral students also choose such topic on which they have less understanding. Current study findings are in line with Gul et al. (2021) study as findings of this study showed that perceived ease, supervisor's area of interest, and data accessibility were ranked in order of importance by the students. The findings are consistent with earlier studies demonstrating that students favor working in spaces that their supervisors enjoy as well as those where data is most easily accessible (Sherfield et al., 2005). According to another study conducted by Shahid and Shahzad (2013) students from Asian backgrounds prefer to choose themes that are more popular with their supervisors (Useem, 1997).

The findings also show that respondents favor decisions making on topic selection based on their own views and experiences. This evidence is also consistent with earlier studies showing that students frequently attempt to choose a research topic based on personal experience (Sherfield, Montgomery & Moody, 2005; Ameen et al, 2009). The study's findings confirm those of a

historical investigation into the elements influencing dissertation topic choices, elucidate the factors affecting advisers' areas of expertise, and provide future directions for research to affect student job fields (Olalere et al., 2014). When choosing a research topic, the researcher's own observations and experiences are also important, and the findings of the current study corroborate this idea. Further findings reported that supervisor's role is very important because he/she guides from fist point to end. Doctoral student's performance also effects due to supervision style, quality of communication between students and teachers even them always cooperative with their students.

Results of the study also stated that doctoral students used different strategies to select topic such as consulted different sources like databases of HEC, Digital Library, online books, journals and articles then select the variables of their interest. They revealed that don't select topic out of your field or interest and must be consulted with previous literature. These findings associated with Ameen et al. (2019) that found that students used different sources as most significant information sources were previous theses, teacher/supervisor and research articles. Secondly, significant information sources were google scholar, seniors/peers, different books, indexing/ abstracting services and thirdly less significant sources were social media. But current study revealed that doctoral students used different sources as databases of HEC, Digital Library, online books, and journals. Further findings of the study stated that there are many issues that doctoral students faced during the selection of topic such as lack of guidance, funding, time management opportunities and to find research gap.

Ameen et al. (2018) findings align with the current study as it stated researchers face problems in English language, due to financial problems, personal issues, lack of conceptual clarity, non-supportive infrastructure and literature issues. The purpose of developing research skills in doctoral students is to support the growth of a knowledge domain and its practices. Only when young researchers are taught to think critically and independently, they are able to plan, carry out, write, and present their research in accordance with research ethics and select researchable topics.

Conclusion

It is concluded that all doctoral students' experiences showed that selection of topic not an easy task it needs effort to identify area of interest and also followed the research interest of their

supervisor. Research supervisor play an important role in student's topic selection and provide direction from start to end. Student used different sources to select topic and they reviewed previous literature, consulted supervisors and their peers. But they face some problems as financial issue, improper guidance and lack of clarity about their variables.

Practical Implications for policy and practice

Findings of the current study showed that doctoral students lived experiences about selection of research topic play significant role in any doctoral degree program and affected by different factors. When different universities or departments conduct research seminars, workshops and conferences for improving experiences of doctoral students, they need to be focused, active and motivated towards learning all research processes that can improve their experiences.

In all that, findings of the current study provide implications for policy and practice, doctoral students, supervisors and researcher as well. Results of the study aid with policy makers how they can improve the standards of research degree programs and what types of practical research activities we need to add in scheme of studies that can enhance students experiences about topic selection/research problem/research variables. Similarly, research supervisors also get an idea where doctoral students face problems and students need their proper support and guidance to formulate research problem. Furthermore, by evaluating results of this study future researcher can find a direction to conduct further study in other discipline and quantitatively.

Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of doctoral students about topic selection. Researcher employed qualitative phenomenological research design by using purposive sampling technique. One to one in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data about the experiences of doctoral students and after careful transcription of recorded data thematic analysis was done by the researcher. Based on the results of the current study some recommendation has been given which are as follows:

1. Findings of the study reveled that selection of topic is a crucial process in doctoral research that need special attention to improve the lived experiences of doctoral students, that's why it is suggested that students select topic related to their interest and supervisor field of interest.

2. Research supervisors are the backbone for doctoral students, their support and feedback motivate them in positive manners or otherwise. Results suggested that supervisors should play their role properly when their students are working on topic selection or thesis.

3. Findings reveled that doctoral students' experiences towards research topic selection are not outstanding most of the time. So, it is recommended that during PhD course work teachers must train them about how they can select or formulate research problem in certain field.

4. Lastly, students face several problems as selection of variables, find research gap, contextual issues, supervisors' area of expertise, students lack of expertise in research. In all that, the study recommended that doctoral students should have proper liberty towards selection of topic and need to learn all tricks and techniques because a good or valuable research topic is dare need of doctoral degree.

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