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THE EFFECT OF MARITAL STATUS AND INSTITUTIONAL TYPE ON POSTGRADUATE COMPLETION OUTCOMES IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract: The primary aim of this study was to determine the relationship that exists between marital status, affiliation of institutions, and the probability of postgraduate students graduating from Cross River State public universities, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were developed to guide the inquiry process. The inquiry utilized a survey-based descriptive approach, where a sample of 5,114 postgraduate students of Cross River State University of Science and Calabar University of Science were sampled using a questionnaire. The postgraduate students of the aforementioned institutions were sampled using the Taro Yamane formula, where there were 383 postgraduate students sampled for use in the study. A questionnaire created by researchers had reliability indices of 0.070 to 0.082, where it was utilized to gather data. The analyzed data were assessed using inferential tests of statistical analysis, including independent t-tests and one-way, two-way, and three-way Analysis of Variance, together with descriptive measures of mean and standard deviation. The findings indicated that students' marital status and affiliation of institutions have great impacts on postgraduate students' probability of graduating within institutions of higher learning in Cross River State. Based on findings, lecturers and instructors are advised to focus on differences that exist in attitudes of students on marital issues regarding responsibilities, group activities, and activities of taking part in responsibilities of institutions.

Keywords: Student affiliation, Marital Status, Postgraduate Programme completion, student factors

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Postgraduate education is a crucial component of higher learning, aimed at developing advanced knowledge, research capabilities, and professional skills necessary for national development. Postgraduate degrees in Nigeria include Postgraduate diploma, Master's degree, and Doctoral degree. Postgraduate coursework or research can both result in a master's degree. The typical components of a master's degree program, which can last anywhere from 18 months to 36 months, include coursework, seminars, and a dissertation. A research thesis, seminars, and coursework

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are all potential components of the 36-month doctoral program. As per the University of Cross River State Graduate School Handbook (2021), students are required to defend their completed research in front of a panel of examiners, which includes the department head, the departmental postgraduate coordinator, representatives from the faculty and postgraduate school, and any other faculty or staff members who hold a PhD from the department, in order to receive a postgraduate degree. Therefore, students at this level of education are expected to have a wide range of skills and competences cutting across research, communication, social, self-management, independence, and resilience to surmount the hurdles accompanying postgraduate programmes. Without a reasonable grasp of these skills, the chances of successfully completing their programmes of study could be jeopardized.

Omorobi (2018) defines post-graduate education programs as those that enable students to develop a diverse array of credentials, such as degrees, certificates, diplomas, and more, by building upon a first or bachelor's degree. It may also refer to additional education beyond the minimum requirements for a Bachelor's degree. It is typically taken by individuals to further their knowledge of a particular field of study, broaden their interests, or establish a new professional endeavour. Additionally, the certifications, diplomas, and degrees that post-secondary students typically pursue after obtaining a bachelor's degree are included (Wordnetweb, 2018). In Nigeria, public universities play a key role in providing postgraduate training, yet programme completion rates remain a major concern. Marital status and institutional affiliation are closely linked to delay in programme completion amongst graduate students. Marital status seriously play a significant role in the manner and approach of graduate students to their studies. Some students may have supportive spouse, other may have unsupportive spouses, and while some may be single, all of these has a way of affecting the pursuit of the studies. Institutional affiliation here implies the institution which students attend. It is worthy to note that institution attended could play very significant role in students' programme completion; this is because institutional differences in availability of human and material resources and different management style could influence the completion of graduate programmes.

More often than not, finishing a programme in record time and or unnecessary delay may arise due general attitude of both students and supervisors. Pulford and Wilspo (2018) and Usta (2017) attribute programme delay among students to lack of motivation. They observe that without adequate motivation students could hurriedly abandon their study due to some hurdles of graduate programmes. Thus, most students who drop out have low motivation compared to those who persist to the end.

Theoretical framework

The researchers adopted Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs (1943) for the study.

Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs (1943)

Due to their biological, psychological, and social components, humans possess an extensive array of requirements, as per Maslow. These needs, which may vary from one individual to another, are arranged in a hierarchical fashion, progressing from the most basic physiological requirements to more intricate social and psychological needs. The "hierarchy of Needs Pyramid" was also constructed from Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, which is widely regarded as one of the most influential frameworks for comprehending motivation. Psychological needs encompass an individual's physiological necessities, such as breathing, consuming, drinking, sleeping, resting, and locating a secure residence. Even though physiological needs are primarily satisfied, new requirements arise that are classified as safety needs (Maslow, 1943). This category encompasses requirements such as safety, self-assurance, and the

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absence of dread. Financial security is a critical component of your safety needs. After the demands for physiological requirements and safety have been met, the desire for affection, commitment, and belongingness emerges. Maslow emphasises that individuals are inherently gregarious in this level of his theory. A person's desire for love and belonging is multifaceted, encompassing a variety of aspects of their being, such as attachment to a spouse, children, and material possessions, as well as a sense of belonging to a group (e.g., a church, a club, a professional association, etc.). Two distinct kinds of esteem needs exist. The first is the aspiration for external validation of one's worth through factors such as social status, public recognition, and favourable word of mouth. The second is the significance of possessing attributes that enhance one's self-esteem and admiration, including autonomy, competence, confidence, and achievement. In spite of satisfying all other prerequisites in Maslow's hierarchy, feelings of unease and dissatisfaction may endure at the level of self-actualization. This is the reason why individuals should conduct themselves in accordance with their own capabilities. A writer should write, an artist should create art, and a musician should perform music in order to be happy. The potential of any individual to become anything they choose is limitless. Self-realization encompasses the pursuit of optimal self-image, the refinement of one's capabilities, and the realisation of one's complete potential.

The relationship of this theory to the current study is that postgraduate programmes is a need which graduate students seek to achieve like every other need in the hierarchy of need and their motivation to pursue graduate study is based on a particular inner driving desire which needs to be satisfied by achieving or fulfilling it through completion of their programmes of study. Therefore, when they complete these programmes they have a sense of achievement and satisfaction for their mile stone. Adversely, failure to complete the programme results in dissatisfaction and lack of courage to undertake further or any other educational endeavour.

Statement of the problem

Postgraduate programmes exist in many universities to provide opportunities for further studies into professional cadres of every profession. Basically, these programmes lead to the award of Master and Doctoral degrees. More often than not, these programmes are research intensive, as each graduate student is expected to independently initiate and complete an original thesis or dissertation research. This and other complex activities of the programme usually presents severe challenges that sometimes hinder the completion of the programme. Similarly, many students enroll into graduate programmes in universities in Cross River State annually. Regrettably, a reasonable proportion of these students drop out of the programmes, while some who dare to complete their programmes of studies are usually acutely very small in number. Moreover, those who finally graduate, sometime do so long after the statutory duration of the programmes have elapsed. These scenarios presents profound challenges to students and the universities in general because, it translates to a huge loss of time, energy, resources and funds. This is very dangerous for the economy and higher education institutions that need such critical high and complex human resource at top managerial/Faculty positions for the smooth running of their organizations and tertiary institutions.

The profound nature of these problems have resulted in general brain drain, intellectual and capital flight to foreign countries through high patronage of overseas studies by many young highly intelligent Nigerians particularly for postgraduate studies. If this trend is not abated, it might inflict negative outcomes on our institutions which might lead to a deficit of professional in all sectors of the Nigerian policy. However, some efforts have been made by institutions and lecturers to facilitate seamless processes of students' academic progress and completion of graduate

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programmes. They include introduction of research seminars to graduate students, encouraging students to write and publish in learned academic journals, conference attendance and provision as well as timely release of stipend to supervisors. Additionally, some institutions have furnished electronic libraries providing ICT services to supervisors and students, provision of campus-wide WiFi network and improved power supply to promote a sound and congenial environment that provides support to research activities. Yet some students seem to leave their programmes of studies halfway. This could be attributed to the poor attention of critical variables traceable to students and supervisors that profoundly hinders students' academic progress and timely completion of graduate programmes.

However, these ignored variables, which seem to be most critical to the internal efficiency of graduate programmes include students' marital status and institutional affiliation. Therefore, if these indices are judiciously managed, there is high probability that students' progress and programme completion tendency might improve significantly. Hence, the study seeks to examine the puzzle. How does marital status and institutional affiliation influences programme completion tendency among post graduate students in Public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between marital status and institutional affiliation and programme completion tendency among post graduate students in Public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Determine how marital status influence postgraduate programme completion tendency;
 - ii. Ascertain how institutional affiliation influence postgraduate programme completion tendency;
 - iii. Find out how marital status and students affiliation influence postgraduate programme completion tendency;
- and,

Research questions

The following are the research questions formulated to guide the study;

- i. To what extent does marital status influence postgraduate programme completion tendency?
- ii. To what extent does institutional affiliation influence postgraduate programme completion tendency?
- iii. What is the influence of marital status and students' affiliation influence postgraduate programme completion tendency?

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were employed to guide the study:

- i. Marital status does not significantly influence postgraduate programme completion tendency
- ii. Institutional affiliation does not significantly influence postgraduate programme completion tendency
- iii. There is no significant influence of marital status and students affiliation on postgraduate programme completion tendency

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marital status and postgraduate students programme completion tendency

The academic performance of undergraduates who are married is superior to that of their single counterparts, as demonstrated by numerous global studies. It is a widely held belief that the increased workload may result in a decline in academic performance after marriage. It is conceivable that married students have a higher attrition rate,

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which would result in the remaining married students being a subgroup that is highly diligent and determined. Similarly, future studies that examine academic performance and marital status should also examine the relative rates of attrition. The qualitative interview data of married students reveals a diverse array of themes, with the most prominent being the ways in which their academic performance has been improved by their personal development and drive.

Amuda, Bulus, and Joseph (2016) conducted a study in the states of northeastern Nigeria to investigate the correlation between the degree students were pursuing and their marital status as indicators of their academic performance. The objectives of the investigation were to (1) determine the academic performance levels of NCE students in the North-Eastern States of Nigeria, (2) identify the factors that significantly predict the program completion rate of NCE students in Colleges of Education, and (3) identify the factors that significantly predict age. The objective of the investigation was to evaluate two hypotheses and address a single inquiry. The study employed a survey methodology. A total of 13,529 individuals, including 8,422 men and 5,107 women, participated in the survey, including 1,200 students from six institutions of education in the Northeastern States of Nigeria. The investigation employed both basic random sampling and stratified sampling to select its participants. The researchers employed the Study Habit and Examination Taking Technique Inventory by Carew and Hamman-Tukur (1996) and their own Proforma to collect data. The data was analysed using multiple linear regression and descriptive statistics. The findings indicated that the academic performance of NCE students at colleges of education in the North-Eastern States of Nigeria was exceptional. Pass or fail grades were received by 33.3% of the students, while 66.7% received grades ranging from merit (C) to distinction (A). In Nigeria's northeastern colleges of education, students' completion of their degree programs was not substantially predicted by their marital status or major. While assigning tasks, forming groups, placing students in courses, and engaging in other academic activities, it was recommended that college instructors closely monitor marital and age disparities in academic performance. Teachers and guidance counsellors must possess a comprehensive understanding of the various study habits and how to integrate them into their courses in order to assist their students in achieving academic success. This approach will provide students with a diverse array of study skills and increase their likelihood of realising their maximum potential.

Proyrazi and Philip (2016) examined the adjustment stressors encountered by international students in the United States in relation to four variables: marital status, ethnicity, discipline, and degree obtained. Researchers discovered that married international students outperformed their unattached counterparts through correlation and multiple regression analysis. The investigation comprised 149 international students from five universities in the United States. For an extended period of time, individuals have been intrigued by the impact of demographic variables (including marital status and affiliation) on academic performance. This study endeavours to assess the correlation between educational performance and these characteristics, as per Erikson's theory of social development, which identifies demographic factors as having an impact at various life stages. The survey technique was implemented in the investigation. In order to derive our conclusions, we employed a random sample of 2,986 college students from various regions of Pakistan. Multistage cluster sampling was implemented to accumulate data. The instrument took into account fourteen demographic variables, each of which had the potential to influence a specific aspect of the emotional or social well-being of the students. The cumulative grade point average (CGPA) was employed to

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assess the academic performance of the students. The demographic variables that were employed in this study were as follows: gender, age, department, present residency (hostel/home), university sectors, residential region (urban/rural), province, sibling order, employment status, genetic background (inbreeding/crossbreeding), and marital status. SPSS was employed to conduct the data analysis. Statistical techniques, including the t-test, ANOVA, and chi-square, were implemented to analyse the data. The results of the study demonstrated the diverse effects of these elements on the academic performance of university students.

In a study conducted by Young (2020), examine the influence of marital status and major on the intentions of high school seniors to pursue further education. An online survey was completed by 343 students from three distinct public comprehensive high schools for the purpose of this investigation. We conducted a hierarchical logistic regression and identified a statistically significant outcome. Grade point average (GPA) was a significant predictor of having a postsecondary objective, whereas marital status and field of study were not. The results did not reject the null hypothesis, indicating that marital status and major did not significantly predict whether or not students had a postsecondary plan. The secondary objective of this research was to identify the factors that students felt most strongly about when selecting a college, using profile analysis with repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). The repeated measures ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant variation in the mean responses for the various obstacles, as well as for the various barriers based on marital status and degree program. Financial constraints, application capacity, success expectations, social anxiety, and parental experiences and expectations were among the numerous factors that differed considerably.

Aashiq, Zhang, Tahir, and Anam (2023) once more investigated the influence of marital status and major on degree completion. The descriptive survey approach was employed in the study, which involved all primary school students in the Mansehra district. The sample was selected through a two-stage random sampling procedure. The students' marital status and the subjects they were studying were determined through the use of a questionnaire. Additionally, a 40-question multiple-choice test was administered to assess their academic performance in mathematics and English. Cronbach's alpha determined that the questionnaire and test had a reliability value of 0.85 and 0.83, respectively. The data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, and means. In order to mitigate disparities in educational outcomes among students from a variety of socioeconomic contexts, it is imperative that we implement targeted interventions. This research indicates that parental education, marital status, and the course of study are significant predictors of program completion.

In order to assess the increasing importance of student test scores, Barry (2015) investigated the numerous factors that influence them. The composite test scores of tenth graders from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 are analysed using a four-part model that includes student role performance, school, family, and peer characteristics. The marital status of students is the most significant factor influencing their exam outcomes, followed by their major, according to Ordinary Least Squares analysis. This results in a statistically significant increase of .924 points in the standardised coefficient. These findings also reinforce prior research and prospective public policy alternatives.

Stratton and Wetze (2019) discovered a robust correlation between factors such as marital status, major, income, familial education, and race/ethnicity and the attainment of a bachelor's degree and these variables. The high degree of overlap between these measures makes it difficult to isolate their respective effects. Additionally, the lack of

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readily available data on program completion tendencies, background/ability, and marital status further complicates the process of conducting statistical analyses. In order to elucidate these issues, we employ data from the Beginning Postsecondary Survey, which was conducted between 1996 and 2001 and included first-year students at four-year colleges nationwide. We employ a multinomial logistic model to account for persistence in addition to graduation, as 36% of students who have not yet graduated are still enrolled at the six-year point. According to the research, the observed graduation tendency gap for students from disadvantaged families is accounted for by disparities in academic aptitude or ability, which range from 30 to 55%. In terms of statistics, the outcomes of withdrawal and persistence are distinct. On average, Hispanics have a lower graduation rate after six years; however, this is not due to their abandonment; rather, it is due to their significantly higher likelihood of remaining enrolled. Conversely, it appears that first-generation college students have a greater rate of dropout.

Institutional affiliation and graduation tendency among graduate students

The school to which a student attends class is determined by their institutional affiliation. Students' ability to finish graduate programs may differ significantly contingent on the institution they attended. This is a result of the fact that various institutions have varying management styles, access to resources (both human and material), and other factors. Their quality is significantly evaluated by their institutional affiliation (Silvadaa, Zulmeira-Herr, Manotasa, Quintero, and Herrera-Fontalvo, 2023). The institutions have simplified their procedures and developed innovative ideas in order to achieve this objective of on-time graduation. However, they have also identified several obstacles that impede progress. The objective of this investigation was to evaluate a variety of variables in order to ascertain which ones influence the academic objectives of students at a specific university. This was accomplished through a comprehensive examination of existing research and the application of qualitative techniques to the diverse stakeholders involved in the process. The results indicated that economic and institutional factors have the greatest impact. We employed the Business Model Canvas tool to create a model that addresses both economic and institutional factors in order to guarantee that undergraduates complete their studies timely, armed with this information. Our model emphasises institutional accompaniment and community funding.

Beard and Langlais (2018) conducted an analysis to determine whether the character of a couple's relationship affects the correlation between academic achievement and married status. The data utilised in this investigation was obtained from an online survey that was conducted among 111 undergraduate students at a university situated in the Midwest region of the United States. 81.1% of these pupils were female, 87.4% were White or Caucasian, and 21.2% were married. The findings indicated that marital status has a negative correlation with both the cumulative and perceived grade point averages. Academic performance was not influenced by the link between marital status and relationship quality, relationship satisfaction, or relationship communication. The consequences on the academic achievement and development of young adults will be the subject of discussion.

Muthukrishnan, Sidhu, Hoon, Narayanan, and Fook (2022) investigated the influence of supervisory methodologies, institutional support, students' self-management and research skills, and their motivation to graduate on time (GOT). The survey was completed by 191 postgraduate students from three distinct Malaysian universities. The quantitative data was analysed using the PLS-SEM procedure. The findings indicated that the motivation to participate in GOT among postgraduate students was significantly influenced by their self-management abilities, research skills, and institutional support. There was also a distinct correlation between the desire to GOT and

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research abilities. Research skills further mediated the associations between institutional support, students' self-management abilities, and postgraduate students' motivation to GOT. However, there was no evidence of direct or indirect effects that would justify supervisory actions towards GOT. The implications for universities, faculty, and postgraduate students are extensive and significant.

Brandsma-Dieters (2018) endeavoured to ascertain the causes of study delays by examining the correlation between academic performance and previous education. Compared to students from HAVO or MBO backgrounds, those from VWO backgrounds had a higher rate of expeditious graduation, according to the longitudinal study. The primary discovery of an analysis of study success based on secondary education profiles was that, despite the significant difference between HAVO and VWO profiles, VWO profiles do not predict study success. The average graduation time is prolonged for students whose preferred profile is Economics & Society in both cases. In May 2012, an email questionnaire was sent to all students in the database to ascertain the reason for their delayed studies. The survey was completed by 281 individuals in some capacity. The regression analysis results indicate that a paucity of personal support from personnel is one of the primary factors influencing study delay. The ability to balance employment and academic pursuits is another significant factor. The regression analysis and the qualitative analysis of factors on study delay would not be consistent if the majority of respondents listed personal issues as a significant effect in an open-ended question.

According to Morison and Cowley (2017), university-based enabling programs (EPs) facilitate the enrolment of up to 20% of undergraduates in postsecondary programs in Australia. It is imperative to investigate the causes and consequences of program attrition, as it has an impact on society, universities, and students. The objective of this investigation was to contrast the experiences of students who failed to complete an EP with those who successfully completed one in order to determine the factors that contributed to their attrition rate. Interviews were conducted individually with students from the University of Newcastle in New South Wales and Australia who participated in EPs as part of the qualitative methodology employed in the investigation. The qualitative interviews corroborated the findings of previous research on the complex issue of student attrition. Four variables were identified in the preceding research as having a substantial influence on the results: student involvement level, individual situations, support service utilisation, and time constraints. Qualitative interviews were instrumental in elucidating the functionality of these components, which in turn facilitated the development of practical strategies to reduce attrition. The paper recommends that early and personalised interventions with students should be prioritised in order to reduce EP attrition rates. These interventions should concentrate on the availability of flexible study options, time management, and self-confidence. It is also important to contemplate providing additional support to students in the evenings and among mature age groups. These implications can facilitate a more comprehensive comprehension of the factors that contribute to EP attrition and retention.

Research conducted by Omokaro and Akpojaro (2022) revealed that Nigerian students prioritise university education over polytechnic education. The study involves students from a variety of universities and polytechnics in Delta State, both current and future. The sample was selected using stratified sampling. The Mann Whitney U test and the chi-square test of independence were employed in the data analysis for this study. The findings indicated that college degrees are significantly more prevalent than polytechnic ones ($W = 215.0$ $p = 0.041$). The study indicates that the decision between a polytechnic education and a university degree is influenced by a variety of

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factors ($\chi^2 = 36.03$, $p = 0.000$). Finally, the research indicates that the majority of students and prospective students have a strong preference for university admission, with 89% of respondents citing the higher wage and promotion opportunities that B.Sc degrees offer (93%). Employers prioritise BSc over HND, which leads to the question of what university graduates possess that polytechnic graduates do not.

Bhatt, Bell, Rubin, Shiflet, and Hodges (2021) conducted an analysis of 221,981 students' records from 35 distinct institutions, utilising data obtained from Student Success through International Education (CASSIE). A total of 30,549 students have pursued their education abroad. According to an analysis that employed nearest-neighbor matching techniques to account for a diverse array of potentially confounding characteristics and to match based on institution, education abroad has a positive impact on both the cumulative GPA at graduation and the probability of graduating within four or six years. Studying abroad was associated with a minor increase in credit hours obtained, which was counterbalanced by a slight decrease in time-to-degree. In general, the data corroborates the notion that attending college abroad does not postpone graduation. On the other hand, students are more likely to complete their college education when they are motivated to study abroad. Students with a history of multiple study abroad programs and those with varying program durations exhibited comparable results.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

The descriptive survey design was implemented for this investigation. The selection of this design is contingent upon the fact that descriptive design pertains to the population, situation, or phenomenon under investigation.

Population of the study

The population of this study consisted of all the 5,114 post graduate students. The total population from the University of Calabar, between 2018-2022 academic session stood at 4498 (male = 2646 and female are 1852). While UNICROSS stood at 616 (male = 301 and female are 315).

Sampling technique

Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study. This technique was considered as the most suitable for this study, since the particular students of interest here were specifically those whose programme had exceeded the formally prescribed duration of the programmes.

Sample size determination

The sample of this study consisted of 383 post graduate students of UNICAL and UNICROSS who were admitted from 2018-2022 as obtained from the field survey 2023. UNICAL stood at 292 (male = 153 and female are 139), UNICROSS stood at 91 (male = 53 and female are 38).

Instrumentation

The researcher collaborated with lecturers and other experts in the field of test and measurement in the Educational Foundations UNICAL and UNICROSS unit to develop a self-constructed questionnaire for data collection.

The instrument items were all measured on a four point Likert-type scale with items options positively and negatively worded. Furthermore, responses were scaled from Strongly Agreed (SA) to Strongly Disagreed (SD) as a scoring of 4 points to 1 point positively worded items and vice versa. Respondents are to read carefully through each statement and tick the correct alternatives out of the four responses.

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Validity of the instrument

In order to guarantee that the instrument was adequately face-validated, the researcher administered it to three experts. The experts were from the Faculty of Education's Test and Measurement Unit at the University of Calabar and Cross River University [UNICROSS] Calabar, respectively. This was to ensure that the items were appropriate, content was covered, the language was clear, and the items were suitable. Any ambiguous or non-measurable items were identified and removed, and they were subsequently substituted with valid items.

Reliability of the instrument

The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through pilot testing of the instrument which was administered to 40 respondents (postgraduates students) in UNICAL and UNICROSS who were part of the population but were not included in the final sample of the study. The completed questionnaire were collected and coded accordingly. The copies of the questionnaire were administered once to the respondents after which the coefficient of internal consistency was estimated and the reliability index ranged from .70 to .82 accordingly which shows that the instrument was highly reliable for data collection. The result of the data analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Coefficient of Internal consistency for Programme Completion

Tendency Questionnaire (PCTQ) (n=40)

S/N	VARIABLE	N	$\sum Si^2$					SD^2	∞	Mean	SD
i.	Course work tendency	10	32.06	2.09	3.09	4.37	.79				
ii.	Health/financial tendency	10	31.12	2.00	3.09	4.00	.82				
iii.	Thesis/dissertation tendency	10	31.41	2.18	3.92	4.75	.70				
iv.	Communication gaps tendency	10	31.48	2.11	3.17	4.45	.75				
v.	Overall scale for PCTQ	40	86.98	5.72	3.56	32.72	.76				

Procedure for data collection

The researcher visited each of the sampled institutions (UNICAL and UNICROSS) with a letter of introduction from the department where the study was embarked on. Each of the school visited by the researcher with the assistants obtain permission from the school authorities to use the School for the study, then the questionnaires was administered to the students. The researcher with the help of the trained research assistants gave the students orientation of how to complete the questions and the duration for submission. The research assistants also ensured that the environment was conducive for the students to be comfortable while filling the items in the instrument. This helped to reduce the incidence of bad items and to also ensure that 98 percent return rate was achieved. The completed copies of the instrument were collected from the respondents at the end of the exercise. This was done on a direct delivery method in which all completed instrument were collected at the spot. The exercise was done repeatedly within an interval of three weeks.

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Procedure for data analysis

Based on research hypotheses raised in the study, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in answering and testing the research questions and hypotheses. The research questions were answered with mean and standard deviation while the stated null hypothesis were tested with independent t-test, One-way Analysis of variance, two and three way Analysis of Variance which were all tested at .05 level of significance.

Hypothesis one

Marital status does not significantly influence postgraduate programme completion tendency in public universities in Cross River State?

Independent variable: Students' marital status

Dependent variable Programme completion tendency

Statistical analysis technique: One-way ANOVA

Hypothesis two

Institutional affiliation does not significantly influence postgraduate programme completion tendency in public universities in Cross River State.

Independent variable: Students' institutional affiliation
Dependent variable Programme completion tendency

Statistical analysis technique: One-way ANOVA

Hypothesis three

There is no significant influence of marital status and students' affiliation on postgraduate programme completion tendency in public universities in Cross River State

Independent variable: Marital status and institutional affiliation

Dependent variable Programme completion tendency

Statistical analysis technique: Two way-ANOVA

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation of results

Hypothesis one

Marital status does not significantly influence postgraduate programme completion tendency. The major independent variable in this hypothesis is the marital status, categorized in terms of married, single, divorced, separated and widowed/widower. The dependent variable is programme completion tendency. To test this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance was adopted with marital status as a factor and programme completion tendency as the dependent variable. The F-ratio test was employed to test the significance of main influence while the Fisher's Least Significance Test (LSD) was employed to as Post-hoc comparison.

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Table 2

One-way ANOVA of marital status on postgraduate
Programme completion tendency

Sources of variance	Sum of	Mean			
Course work tendency	Squares	Df	Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	354.735	4	88.684	8.844	.000
Within Groups	3750.300	374	10.028		
Total	4105.034	378			
*p<.05					
Health and financial tendency					
Between Groups	607.691	4	151.923	12.578	.000
Within Groups	4517.455	374	12.079		
Total	5125.145	378			
*p<.05					
Thesis/dissertation issues					
Between Groups	254.977	4	63.744	6.062	.000
Within Groups	3932.781	374	10.515		
Total	4187.757	378			
* p<.05					
Communication gaps tendency					
Between Groups	1025.140	4	256.285	24.594	.000
Within Groups	3897.393	374	10.421		
Total	4922.533	378			
*p<.05					

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The rejection of hypothesis two calls for a Post-hoc comparison which was executed with Fisher's Least Significance Difference (LSD) to determine where exactly groups differ significantly. The post hoc analysis in Table 15, of marital status on programme completion in terms of course work tendency shows that the mean differences lies in the categories of married and single (MD =1.43611, $p=.000<.05$), married and divorced (MD =1.43870, $p=.006<.05$), married and widowed/widower (MD =3.14901, $p=.003<.05$) and for all the reversed categories. Again, with marital status on programme completion in terms of health and financial challenges shows that the mean differences lies in the categories of married and divorced (MD =1.23914, $p=.031<.05$), married and widowed/widower (MD =.57512, $p=.000<.05$), single and separated (MD =-1.36479, $p=.017<.05$), divorced and separated (MD =-2.03490, $p=.003<.05$), separated and widowed/widower (MD =5.37088, $p=.000<.05$), and for all the reversed categories

Similarly, with marital status on programme completion in terms of thesis/dissertation tendency shows that the mean differences lies in the categories of married and single (MD =1.38974, $p=.001<.05$), married and divorced (MD =2.01980, $p=.000<.05$), married and widowed (MD =1.58990, $p=.020<.05$), and for all the categories with asterisk (*). With respect to marital status on programme completion in terms of communication gap tendency shows that the mean differences lies in the categories of married and single (MD =-1.22721, $p=.003<.05$), married and divorced (MD =-3.58940, $p=.000<.05$), married and widowed/widower (MD =-4.56233, $p=.000<.05$), and for all the categories with asterisk (*).

Table 3

Post-hoc comparison with Fisher's Least Significance Difference (LSD) with marital status on postgraduate programme completion tendency

Programme completion	Mean			
	in terms of course work	Difference (IJ)	Std. Error	
Marital status	tendency			p-value
Married	Single	1.43611*	.40519	.000
	Divorced	1.43870*	.52167	.006
	Separated	-.23011	.52847	.664
Single	Widowed/widower	3.14901*	.66676	.000
	Married	-1.43611*	.40519	.000
	Divorced	.00258	.51325	.996
	Separated	-1.66622*	.52016	.001
Divorced	Widowed/widower	1.71290*	.66020	.010
	Married	-1.43870*	.52167	.006
	Single	-.00258	.51325	.996
	Separated	-1.66880*	.61525	.007
Separated	Widowed/widower	1.71032*	.73744	.021
	Married	.23011	.52847	.664

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Widowed/widower	Single	1.66622*	.52016	.001
	Divorced	1.66880*	.61525	.007
	Widowed/widower	3.37912*	.74227	.000
	Married	-3.14901*	.66676	.000
	Single	-1.71290*	.66020	.010
	Divorced	-1.71032*	.73744	.021
	Separated	-3.37912*	.74227	.000
Programme completion in terms of				
Marital status health/finance tendency				
Married	Single	.56903	.44470	.201
	Divorced	1.23914*	.57255	.031
	Separated	-.79576	.58001	.171
	Widowed/widower	4.57512*	.73179	.000
Single	Married	-.56903	.44470	.201
	Divorced	.67011	.56331	.235
	Separated	-1.36479*	.57089	.017
	Widowed/widower	4.00609*	.72458	.000
Divorced	Married	-1.23914*	.57255	.031
	Single	-.67011	.56331	.235
	Separated	-2.03490*	.67525	.003
	Widowed/widower	3.33598*	.80936	.000
Separated	Married	.79576	.58001	.171
	Single	1.36479*	.57089	.017
	Divorced	2.03490*	.67525	.003
	Widowed/widower	5.37088*	.81466	.000
Widowed/widower	Married	-4.57512*	.73179	.000
	Single	-4.00609*	.72458	.000
	Divorced	-3.33598*	.80936	.000
	Separated	-5.37088*	.81466	.000
Programme completion Marital status in terms of				
thesis/dissertation tendency				
Married	Single	1.38974*	.41493	.001
	Divorced	2.01980*	.53421	.000
	Separated	-.07493	.54118	.890
	Widowed/widower	1.58990*	.68279	.020
Single	Married	-1.38974*	.41493	.001

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Divorced	Divorced	.63006	.52559	.231
	Separated	-1.46467*	.53267	.006
	Widowed/widower	.20017	.67607	.767
	Married	-2.01980*	.53421	.000
	Single	-.63006	.52559	.231
Separated	Separated	-2.09473*	.63004	.001
	Widowed/widower	-.42989	.75517	.570
	Married	.07493	.54118	.890
	Single	1.46467*	.53267	.006
	Divorced	2.09473*	.63004	.001
Widowed/widower	Widowed/widower	1.66484*	.76011	.029
	Married	-1.58990*	.68279	.020
	Single	-.20017	.67607	.767
	Divorced	.42989	.75517	.570
	Separated	-1.66484*	.76011	.029
Programme completion in terms of				
thesis/dissertation issues				
Married	Single	-1.22721*	.41306	.003
	Divorced	-3.58940*	.53180	.000
	Separated	-4.56233*	.53874	.000
	Widowed/widower	-.40025	.67971	.556
	Married	1.22721*	.41306	.003
Single	Divorced	-2.36219*	.52322	.000
	Separated	-3.33512*	.53027	.000
	Widowed/widower	.82697	.67302	.220
	Married	3.58940*	.53180	.000
	Single	2.36219*	.52322	.000
Divorced	Separated	-.97293	.62720	.122
	Widowed/widower	3.18915*	.75177	.000
	Married	4.56233*	.53874	.000
	Single	3.33512*	.53027	.000
	Divorced	.97293	.62720	.122
Separated	Widowed/widower	4.16209*	.75669	.000
	Married	.40025	.67971	.556
	Single	-.82697	.67302	.220
	Divorced	-3.18915*	.75177	.000
	Separated	-4.16209*	.75669	.000

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*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 4 revealed that a total of 379 respondents that constitutes the study sample for institutional affiliation. In all the categories, UNICAL dominated the study with a total of 289 while the remaining 90 were respondents drawn from UNICROSS. At 377 degrees of freedom with .05 level of significance, the p-value are .000, .000, .000 and .075 accompanied by a t-value of 4.916, 3.903, 4.794 and 1.784 for programme completion tendency (course work tendency, health/financial tendency, thesis/dissertation tendency and communication gaps tendency respectively. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected for course work tendency (* $p=.000 < .05$), health/financial tendency (* $p=.000 < .05$), thesis/dissertation tendency (* $p=.000 < .05$), but accepted for communication gaps tendency ($p=.075 > .05$).

Discussion of findings

The results from the findings are discussed hypothesis by hypothesis as follows;

Marital Status and programme completion tendency among graduate students

It was found that marital status significantly influence postgraduate programme completion tendency in public universities in Cross River State. The findings of the study reflects a coincidence with the reality of the life of an individual whether married, single or divorced. Expectedly, the single sub-category recorded the highest tendency of graduation, followed by the married and lastly the divorced. Again, single graduate students are perhaps younger adults with lesser issues of life bothering them now. Thus, their attention, commitment, time and resources are entirely invested towards graduate studies which could explain why they record far more higher percentages of graduation unlike their counterparts who are either married or divorced. The later sub-groups tend to contend with several vicissitudes of life ranging from responsibilities as spouse, office, anxiety and a catalogue of competing interests. This could lower their attention to their programme of study and thus prolong their time to degree indirectly.

The results of this research are consistent with those of Vue (2021), who conducted an examination of the correlational study on the perception of early marriage and future educational goals for Hmong female adolescents. The respondents had a more favourable attitude towards early marriage and fewer educational objectives, according to the researcher. The study also demonstrates that married respondents without children will have higher educational aspirations than married respondents with children. In a similar vein, Smadi (2020) discovered that certain challenges encountered by graduate students are due to the educational level of the spouse, marital status, age, number of children, and family income. Additionally, it was discovered that numerous women experience delayed graduation as a result of challenges such as overlapping and an increase in household responsibilities and university assignments. The majority of married female students who experience these challenges are in the age range of 31 to 40, and there is no indication that the difficulties are influenced by the family's income, the number of children, or the educational level of the husband.

Institutional affiliation and programme completion tendency among graduate students

It was found that institutional affiliation does significantly influence postgraduate programme completion tendency in public universities in Cross River State. This could be so due to the prevailing school climate or culture of a given school, availability of sufficient and qualified academic staff, institutional research facilities amongst other things which may interact with the entire process of graduate studies of students. This finding align with the results

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of Muthukrishnan, Sidhu, Hoon, Narayanan and Fook (2022) investigated the influence of institutional support, supervisory practices, and students' self-management and research skills on postgraduate students' motivation to graduate on time (GOT). The results revealed that research skills, institutional support and self-management skills significantly influenced the postgraduate students' motivation to GOT. Therefore, adequate institutional support could lead to result to and improvement in the overall number of students who complete their graduate studies successfully in record time.

Marital status and students affiliation on postgraduate programme completion

In public universities in Cross River State, the discovery demonstrated that students' affiliation and marital status have a substantial impact on the likelihood of completing postgraduate programs. The findings are consistent with the investigation of The current results are consistent with the findings of Amuda, Bulus, and Joseph (2016), which indicated that the academic performance of NCE students in Colleges of Education in the North-Eastern States of Nigeria was high. The majority of the distribution ranged from merit (C) to distinction (A), which is 66.7%, while the remaining 33.3% consisted of pass and fail grades. There was no significant correlation between marital status and the course of study in the North-eastern States of Nigeria and the completion of colleges of education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study's findings were so compelling that it was determined that factors related to students, such as marital status and institutional affiliation, can serve as a foundation for comprehending the students, facilitating the identification of the needs, and enhancing policy development or decision-making. At the initial stage of admission, it would seem to be an easy matter to determine whether or not a student can successfully accomplish the required academic tasks, but doing so is complicated by a growing number of academic requirement especially in this globalized era where digitization has occupied the academic.

Recommendations

- i. The following suggestions were implemented for the investigation:
- i. In the Colleges, lecturers/teachers should allocate sufficient attention to the marital status differences in the attitude towards programme completion in terms of assignments, group work, responsibilities, and any other academic activities.
- ii. School management of various institutions should develop and improve general research to facilities the process of student research writing

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