

**COMPLETION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES: EXPERIENCES OF  
MASTERS STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS IN A SELECTED PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITY IN KENYA.**

**BY**

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**MOI UNIVERISTY**

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**DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

Postgraduate education has recently been on the rise due to the quest of many students to attain higher qualifications in their careers. Many students are enrolled at masters' level and are expected to complete their studies within the stipulated time of two years. However, this is not the case as many students fail to complete on time and end up in the university system for many years. Some drop out of the programs. Therefore, this study sought to explore masters' students' and supervisors' experiences on completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya. The study objectives were: to explore the motives of enrolling for postgraduate programmes by masters students in a selected public university in Kenya, to explore masters students' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya, to investigate supervisors' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya and to establish strategies to curb delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory guided the study which was anchored in Interpretivism paradigm. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design. The study involved ten (10) masters students selected using snowball method and nine (9) supervisors who were purposively selected. Data was generated using focus group discussion and individual interviews. Data was thematically analyzed. The study results revealed that delayed completion occurs due to a combination of many factors which are related to masters' students, supervisors and the institution. Some of the factors cited by the students were lack of funds to conduct research projects and working full time employment as well as being registered as full-time students. Supervisors too expressed laxity on the part of students to respond to their feedback, heavy supervision and teaching workloads. The study concludes that completion of postgraduate studies on time is a collective responsibility of students, supervisors and the institution therefore, they should work together as a system, each playing their role to achieve one goal with the student expected to take the proactive responsibility. This study recommends to university's management to take the lead role in ensuring postgraduate students complete their studies on time. These findings have implications for more research in other universities and further recommends that the university management and supervisors should enhance adherence to postgraduate policy. Postgraduate students should be exposed to regular workshops and trainings on research methods and available scholarships and funding opportunities.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband Mr. Victor Nyakundi whose love, understanding and exceptional moral support during the period of conceptualization to the completion of this thesis have been pivotal. To my children; Sherrie, Remish and Lily who have been supportive in their own way as loving children I sincerely hope that this sets an example for them too.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CERM-ESA- East and SouthAfrican- German Center of Excellence for Research Methodologies and Management.

CHE - Commission for Higher Education

CUE - Commission for University Education

M.Ed - Master of Education

PhD - Doctor of Philosophy

SSA - Sub Saharan Africa

UBE - Universal Basic Education

USA - United States of America

UK - United Kingdom

MUBS – Makerere University Business School

HERANA – Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa

CBC – Competence Based Curriculum

TVET – Technical and Vocational Education and Training

TSC – Teachers Service Commission

KI – Key Informant

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study contains the following sections in the order listed; study background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, justification of the study, scope of the study, Assumptions of the study, Theoretical framework and conceptual frameworks of the study.

#### 1.2 Background of the Study

Postgraduate studies are academic programmes that are undertaken once one has earned an undergraduates degree. These programmes are at different levels that is; masters, doctoral, graduate certificates and postgraduate. The mode and duration of these programmes differ with masters and doctoral studies conducted in form of coursework and research, or project work after coursework or even research work only (National Council for Higher Education Postgraduate Benchmark, 2015 cited in Noel et al., 2023). Globally, postgraduate training is an important role played by the higher learning institutions that produce the required work force for economic growth and intellectual capacity of any country. It produces critical benefits for the general public because it provides employment opportunities, enhanced quality of life and more economic growth (Mukhwana, Too &Kande, 2017). Similarly, Chidi & Sylvia, (2020) opines that university education is indispensable in developing and supplying the needed manpower in society. This is due to the kind of robust training postgraduate students receive in areas of project management, problem-solving, research, using existing knowledge to solve challenges and creating new knowledge (Motseke, 2016; Ndayambaje, 2018).

Postgraduate studies is therefore, crucial for any country as it serves as a breeding ground for new developments and innovation( Mukhwana et al., 2016). In the recent past it has received a lot of attention particularly its completion at the level of masters and mostly doctoral level. It is now considered a great achievement by institutions of higher learning, students, funders and the country at large to have a high completion rate. According to Rong'uno (2016) the rate at which postgraduate students fail to complete their studies on time and even drop out in the course of their studies is quite alarming. This justifies the many studies around this subject including this one that focused on experiences of masters students' who face delays in completion of their studies.

Time to graduation has been a concern world over hence studies done internationally by the World Bank, the Association of African Universities, the United States Partnership for Higher Education in Africa , the South African Department of Education among others. Notably, the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) has been involved in studies on postgraduate enrolment and completion rates and its effects on the world economy (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015 cited in Botha, 2016, & Noel et al., 2023).

Universities are also keen on increasing the numbers of students who successfully complete their studies (Botha, 2016). According to Thomas (2015) some universities have made significant improvements to address the issue but it remains a phenomenon that still needs to be understood in context as it is still a weighty issue. In the Kenyan universities, usually masters takes two years and doctoral studies take three years but most students rarely complete at this stipulated time and end up taking double the duration of the programme (Mukhwana et al., 2016)

There is a huge difference between the number of students who enroll in a programme and those that get to graduate, which is a clear indication of a looming shortage of those that will replenish the future professoriate with the requisite training (Creighton & Park, 2010). This is in agreement with the statements that there is a dire need to groom new academicians through masters degrees because world over half or more professionals are getting close to retirement (Altbach, 2007). This justifies why a lot of emphasis on completion of masters studies need to be enhanced as that is the only way more scholars can proceed to the doctoral level to acquire even higher knowledge and expertise. On the other hand, when students complete their studies and graduate on time, they join the labor market as experts in various fields. This also implies that their professional achievements reflect the universities' academic and research excellence which is a benefit to the sponsors and the society at large (Waswa et al. 2020).

Postgraduate studies in Kenya are usually regulated by Commission for higher Education (CUE) a commission that was established by an Act of parliament number 42 of 2012. The structure of Masters programmes usually takes the form of coursework and research work which the student is expected to complete within two years or three years. At the end of this, the student is expected to graduate with the cohort that they enrolled in. Regretably, this is not usually so in most cases. It is usually the norm that once coursework is done, the student is assigned supervisors once the students have declared their interest in a particular scholarly area. This is meant to ensure that they get the assistance they need by being paired with the right expert in that field of study (Noel et al., 2021). However, many students finish the first year successfully but fail to complete the second and third years for masters

and PhD respectively which contain the research component of their studies (Motseke, 2016; Mukhwana et al., 2016).

There is so much anticipated outcome of postgraduate studies and therefore there is a need to take a closer look at the actual postgraduate education process (Botha, 2016). In Kenya, the CUE guidelines state that one can qualify for a master's degree if they have an undergraduate degree with upper second-class honors or a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00 on a scale of 4.00; and or lower second-class honors or a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.50 on a scale of 4.00 with additional relevant training, evidence of research capability either through research, paper presentations or peer-reviewed publications and relevant working experience (CUE Universities Standards & Guidelines, 2014).

The education sector world over has become globalized and competitive as many institutions now offer many similar programs therefore, they are all working towards attracting more potential students to enroll in their programmes especially with the current trend of online learning during this era of Covid 19 pandemic. Governments world over are now considering the internationalization of their programs as a key change agent in higher education (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). This statement also resonates with Mukhwana et al., (2016) who recommends that in order to internationalize education in Kenyan higher learning institutions, there is need for vibrant student exchange programmes and collaborations with other universities. Therefore, institutions of higher learning should strive to ensure their students complete their studies within the stipulated time failure to which becomes damaging to the higher learning institutions' potential to attract new students both locally and internationally.



The studies carried out on the students who get to graduate on time are of significance as they help to inform on areas of improvement. For instance, at Makerere University Business school (MUBS) in Uganda, a study by Eyangu et al., (2014) indicated that on average 86.2% of master's in Business administration (MBA) students did not complete their studies while in MSc. Accounting and Finance, 90.8% of the students were still in the program after their two-year period of studying had elapsed. Similarly, a study by Mugendi & Githae (2021), on prevalence of non-completion of postgraduate studies in Kenyan public universities indicated that half of the students of cohorts 2001-2009 did not complete their studies on time. Further, on analyzing the graduation booklets, the graduation lists of Kenyatta university, Moi university and University of Nairobi a total of thirty two students in 2012, fifty three in 2013 and forty-seven masters' students in 2014 graduated in the respective universities and this was not the complete population of the students enrolled (Musiega, 2018). This justifies this phenomenon as a challenge that all stakeholders need to address and establish practical ways to do so hence this study will add voice to finding its solutions.

The above literature informs that this is a phenomenon that affects many higher learning institutions. Hence the need to look into it and establish the experiences of masters students and supervisors with regards to delayed completion of postgraduate studies. The numbers differ between those who enrolled and those who get to graduate at the stipulated time therefore, one is puzzled by the difference which could be explained by looking into the kind of experiences the students go through. This is so because each student will have a personal journey and hence a narrative that explains that journey of being a masters student. It is important to give a context view of the phenomenon institutionally as it varies from

one institution to another hence this study aimed to explore masters students and supervisors experiences on delayed completion of postgraduate studies.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Completion of postgraduate programmes within the stipulated time is very important to all the parties involved that is the students, university, and the sponsors as well as the country at large. Low or delayed completion has now become of great concern because it is becoming a norm in the institutions of higher learning. Many students are enrolled each academic year in these programmes yet not all of them get to graduate with their cohort members as per the stipulated time of two years. However, there is a growing demand for the expertise of graduates both locally and globally (Mukhwana et al., 2016). This demand in Kenya has been fueled by many factors among which is the fact that since independence, education has always been valued as a stimulant to economic and social growth (Mukhwana et al., 2016). These graduates are also needed to replace the ageing professoriate, staff the rapidly expanding higher learning education field, boost research and generate high-level skills for the growing economic need (MacGregor, 2013).

According to Mukhwana et al, (2016) many students complete their coursework and fail to complete the research work on time in order for them to graduate. Each university has rules and regulations on how postgraduate studies are governed, which clearly state what happens if such a scenario occurs yet they have remained to be just in paper and not practical. Each masters programme also has a course on Research methods whose aim is to prepare students for their research work which they embark on after course work but many students usually complete coursework on time and take long to complete the research component of their studies. The extended time it takes to complete postgraduate studies in

a particular institution acts as a reflection of deficiencies in the management of postgraduate programmes which calls for transformative actions by the institution (Waswa et al, 2020). Since some students get to complete their studies and others do not or delay, it means that they may have different experiences hence the different outputs in terms of completion time. What a masters student experiences in the different programmes of in any particular university need to be contextualized in order to formulate specific recommendations that could be used to curb the delay in the completion of masters programmes.

Regrettably, students, supervisors, and institution management will always complain of the delays in completion of studies at postgraduate level. So where exactly is the cause of delay? Is it the students, supervisors, institutional procedures, policy or all collectively? Also, how can the students who are already experiencing the delay be supported to complete their studies? This study was interested in unearthing the actual factors causing the delay in completion of masters programmes. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the experiences of masters students in relation to delayed programme completion in the context of the selected public University, in the School of Education which has a high student and programme population

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

This study aimed to explore the experiences of masters' students in relation to delayed completion of their studies in the school of Education, in the selected public university.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

This study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To assess the motives of enrolling for postgraduate programmes by masters students in a selected public university in Kenya.
- ii. To explore the masters' students' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya.
- iii. To investigate supervisors' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya.
- iv. To establish practical strategies to curb delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

Below are the research questions that the study sought to answer:

1. What are the motives of enrolling for postgraduate programmes by masters students in a selected public university in Kenya?
2. What are the masters' students' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya?
3. What are the supervisors' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya?
4. What practical strategies can be used to curb delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya?

### **1.7 Justification of the Study**

Delays in completion has become a concern for not only students but higher learning institutions, governments and funding institutions and all stakeholders in postgraduate studies (Noel et al., 2021; Rong'uno, 2016) In Africa studies have been conducted and results have shown that 85% of enrolled students fail to graduate within the stipulated time

(Motseke, 2016) This points out the reasons for more investigations into this phenomenon in order to come up with measures to mitigate the delays in completion of postgraduate studies..

Many studies have focused on PhD students leaving out the masters students (Rong'uno, 2016; Pitchforth et al., 2012; Brew et al., 2017; Akudolu & Adeyemo, 2018). In a bid to respond to this gap the study focused on masters students experiences and especially those that have been enrolled for longer than the stipulated time and have not progressed to complete their studies. If this is not addressed the institutions will end up enrolling many students each year and completion rates will be low. Hence many enrolled students in the university system yet not on the graduation booklets. There is need to establish why the delay and how it can be solved through exploring the experiences of masters students who have faced delays in their studies.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

This study is anticipated to benefit postgraduate students as they will be able to know the role they have to play in order for them to complete their studies on time. The institution too will be able to get the perspective of students and know what needs to be done to support students' completion of their studies on time. It will also be beneficial to the Commission for University Education as it provides them with information on how to support students and higher learning institutions. It also provides the statistics needed for making policies that guide university education. The study findings will be significant to researchers interested in postgraduate completion as it adds to the existing body of knowledge. The findings will also be beneficial to national educational stakeholders such as Ministry of Education and the Government in formulation of policies and funding of

higher learning institutions. Further it will contribute to the achievement of international goal for instance the sustainable development goal number four which aims to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN General Assembly, 2015).

### **1.9 Scope of the Study**

This study was positioned in the field of Educational Management and Policy Studies, a field of study that focuses on effective management of all learning institutions of which management of postgraduate studies is inclusive. It was conducted in one of the public universities in Kenya. The school of education was purposively sampled among the various schools within the particular university. The study sampled masters students who have been enrolled in their programmes for more than the stipulated time of two years. The study was limited to exploring the experiences of masters students who have experienced a delay in completion of their programmes.

### **1.10 Assumptions of the Study**

This study was based on the assumption that the sampled population of masters students would be a representative of all the masters students in the School of Education in the selected university, and that the respondents would give honest opinions based on their experiences with regards to delayed programme completion. It was also an assumption of the study that there would be multiple realities expressed by the participants in the study and therefore, the researcher clustered findings in themes.

### **1.11 Limitations of the Study**

The study being qualitative, its limitations stem from the choice of the methodology and therefore results cannot be generalized to all higher learning institutions but can be

transferred only to a university with a similar context. To mitigate this the researcher only used the exact accounts of the respondents to ensure the results can be confirmed if the same research process is followed. Another limitation was that the study drew its findings from a small number of respondents however this was mitigated by the researcher by sampling respondents who were deemed to yield rich-textured information that would best enable the study to achieve the set out objectives and answer the research questions.

### **1.12 Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations are conditions that limit the scope of the study that is they reflect the choices made by the researcher in terms of focus and scope of the research aim and research questions on what to include and exclude (Bloomberg et al., 2012). This study's delimitations were: it only covered one school in the selected public University and only sampled masters students as participants. The school of Education is one of the oldest in the selected university and has a high student population and many masters programmes are offered hence the experiences of students on delayed programme completion are vast. The inclusion of masters students only and not doctoral students was so as to focus on one level of postgraduate studies that is masters level and specific to students who had experienced the delays in their studies.

### **1.13 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The current study is anchored in Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory (1979) which states that human development and experiences could be explored, understood, and interpreted through the continuous interactions between environmental components (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). According to Jack Leonard (2011), the theory proposes that human development and experiences are engulfed in a set of interrelated systems that influence

the interactions between the individual and the social environment which include people, cultures and the legal structures we interact with. This theory guided the study on how different levels interact and influence delayed completion of studies by masters students in the School of Education, in the selected public University as explained below. The theory presents five concentric systems which acts as the tenets of the theory. The first tenet is the microsystems which symbolizes the immediate environment of a child which in this study will be the masters student immediate surrounding. Next is the mesosystem which is equated to the connections within the systems of this theory. Further there is the exosystem which is the indirect environment of the masters student followed by the macrosystem which represents social and cultural values and finally the chronosystem which signifies the changes that occur over time within the ecosystem of the masters student as an enrolled student at the university. Bronfenbrenner posited that there is a link between the systems which acts as the relationship between the microsystems. The child in this theory would be replaced by the masters student who is enrolled into a masters programme in the selected institution. The institution acts as an ecosystem where the student has to mature through making progress gradually in his or her studies until completion.

The first layer of the system is the microsystem represents the immediate environment of the student, where the masters student has an interaction with his or her immediate surrounding which consists of family, friends, fellow students and lecturers at the university in regards to their studies. This alludes to the fact that these interactions have a role to play in the progression of the masters student in his or her studies.

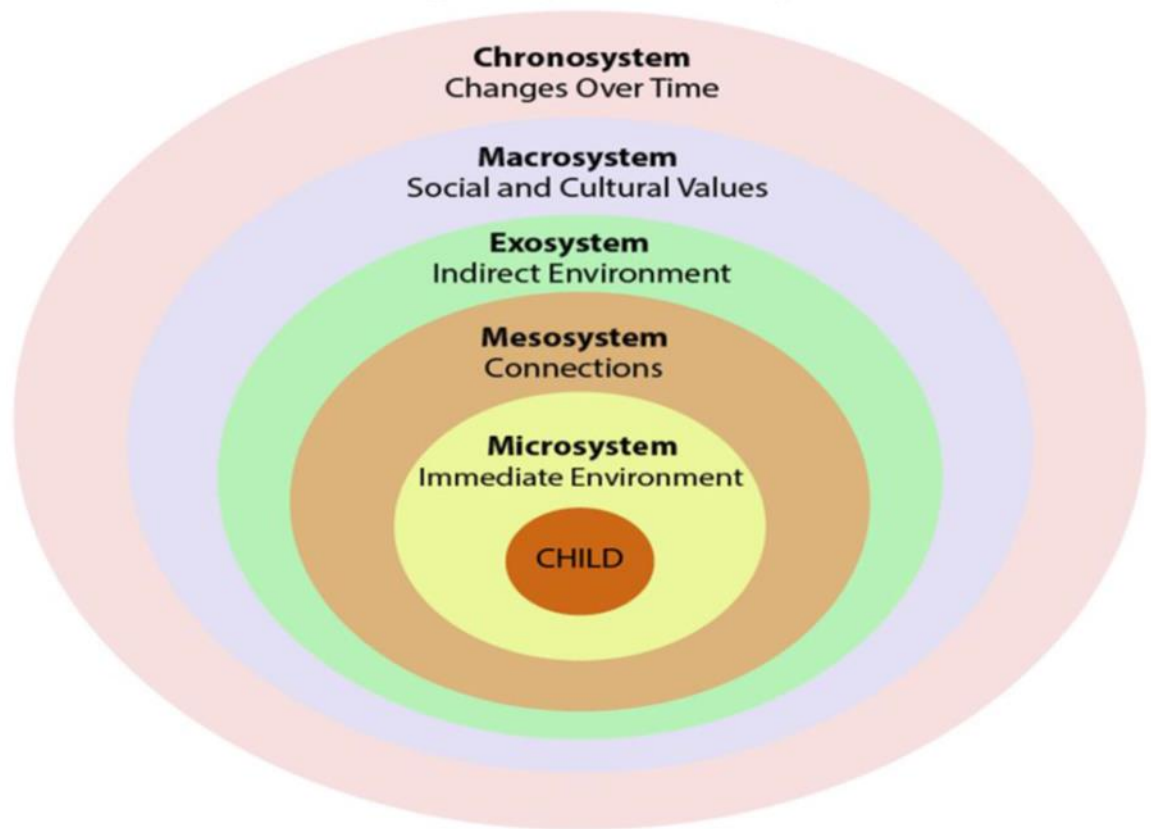
For instance, the kind of interaction with fellow students and that of supervisors how does it influence their completion of their studies? What are the interactions between the masters



students and their lecturers during coursework or supervisors at the research project level? Do they all have a common goal of ensuring students' completion of their studies on time or is one party not in full support of the effort of the other? This relationship between the microsystems becomes part of the masters student's experiences in relation to completion of the masters program they enrolled. This acknowledges the fact that the microsystem do not work in unison but emphasizes the interconnected nature of the sub-systems and their influences on the masters students indirectly. This is what the theory refers to as the mesosystem. Bronfenbrenner defines the next layer as the exosystem. He presents this as a link between two settings; one is an immediate setting and the other is where the person may not play an active role. This includes factors such as the rules and regulations that govern postgraduate studies, CUE guidelines and even regulatory bodies like the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation. All these forms part of the masters students experiences because the student has to adhere to the guidelines outlined by these systems. The student does not have an active role in making of these rules and guidelines by these sectors of higher learning but to participate in the passive role of adhering to the laid down rules. Bronfenbrenner continued to describe the other layer which is the macro system which focuses on how cultural or societal elements form part of the student's experiences at the institution, such as socioeconomic status and poverty. These will look at how financial status may affect a masters student in regards to completing their studies. Then lastly, he presents the issue of time in the layer referred to as the chronosystem. This involves all of the environmental changes that occur over the lifetime of a masters student as a registered student of the selected public University. That is the experiences of the student at the time of their candidature and what time in their lives they

enrolled as students. For instance, some students are way advanced in age and others are young and vibrant and this influences the completion of their studies one way or another. Therefore, in this research, the age bracket of the participants and how long they have been enrolled in their studies was sought so as to contextualize their experiences. Though the age of masters students was not studied in any objective but just as part of the demographics of the participants. The ecological systems theory speaks to this study by demonstrating through the concentric systems the journey of a student as a student at the institution and the levels in which the student should undergo so as to complete their studies on time if the systems work in harmony as suggested by the theory tenets.

### **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

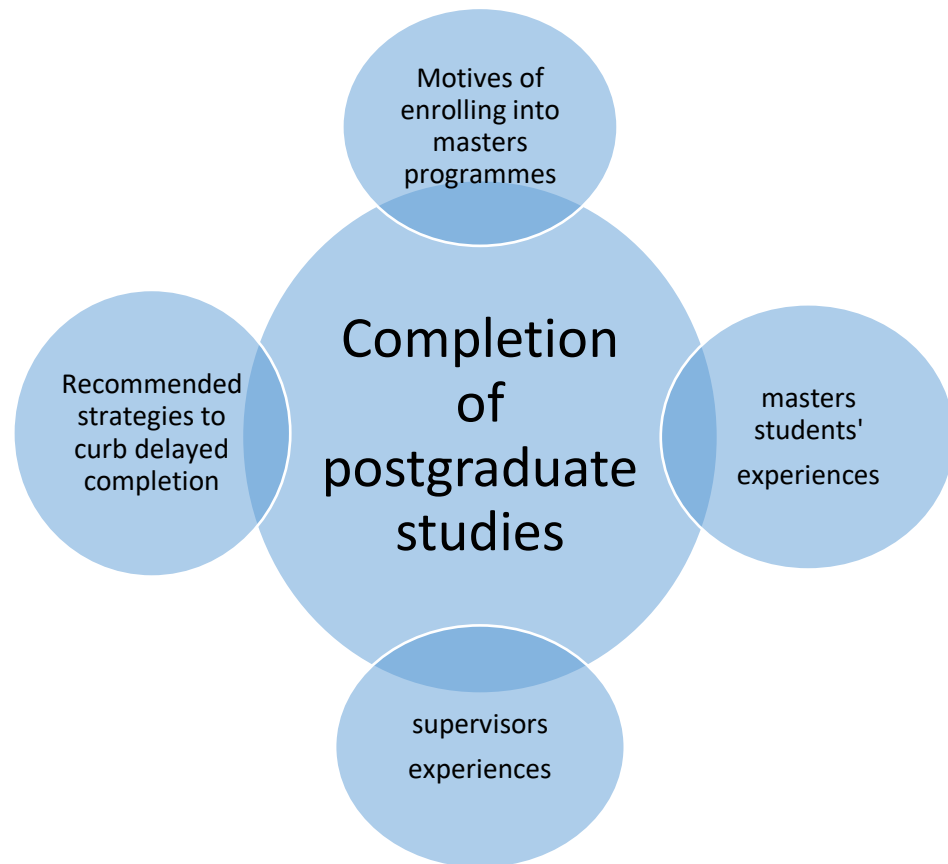


**Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

### **1.14 Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework serves as a guide and ballast to research (Ravitch & Roggan, 2016). It outlines the variables or constructs in a study and how they interact to portray the phenomenon under study.

At the center of the completion of postgraduate studies which is the ultimate goal of the stakeholders involved in this case the student and supervisors and on a broader perspective the institution. However, the motive of enrolment is key as if a student is motivated throughout their studies then completion is realized. However, there are masters student experiences that hinder a steady progress, the same is expressed by supervisors through their own experiences that hinder effective supervision hence these goal of completion becomes difficult to achieve for both participant groups. However, through their experiences they can suggest ways to curb the delays in completion and achieve the timely completion of postgraduate studies. These participants' goal is a joint objective that requires a combined effort as shown in the figure 2 below.



**Figure 2 : Conceptual Framework**

### **1.15 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Experiences** in this study refer to the encounters or circumstances that masters students have lived through in the delay of completion of their studies.

**Delayed programme completion** in this study refers to failure of master's students to finish their studies on the stipulated time of two years.

**Masters students experiences** in this study refer to what an individual masters student underwent or the occurrences of their journey as a masters student that cause delay in completion programme.

**Supervisors' experiences** in this study refer to the reasons or factors given by supervisors as factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies.

**Supervisor-student relationship** refer to the kind of interaction between the supervisor and the masters student during the time of supervision of the student

**Strategies to curb delayed completion of postgraduate studies** refer to the ways recommended by participants in this study to deal with delayed completion if implemented.

### **1.16 Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the background information on postgraduate studies completion, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, justification of the study, the significance of the study, limitations and delimitation of the study, the assumptions, scope, theoretical and conceptual framework and the operational definition of terms. The next chapter will outline the literature review for the study chronologically from a global perspective down the Kenyan context.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This study looked at delay in the completion of masters programmes among masters students in the selected public university in Kenya. It focused on motives for enrolling into masters programmes, individual, institutional and policy related factors that influence the

delay and suggest strategies to curb the delay of programme completion. This chapter, therefore, reviewed literature on motives of enrolling for postgraduate programmes, completion of postgraduate studies, factors that are student-related, institutional and policy related and the possible strategies to curb the delays in completion. This was done chronologically from the global, regional and national perspective as per the objectives of the study.

## **2.2 Postgraduate Students' Motives for Enrollment into Postgraduate Programmes**

Over the years, institutions of higher learning have continued to receive an influx of students enrolling for postgraduate studies both at masters and doctoral level. This is beneficial for all the parties involved that is students, particular institutions, education funders, government and even the society at large. Postgraduate studies is highly regarded as the degree holders are looked upon to be the source and generators of knowledge and even extend the frontiers of knowledge (Ul Hag & Shahzad, 2012).

Enrollment into a postgraduate programme has to be motivated by certain factors best known to the individual student. According to Wao and Onwuegbuzie (2011), motivation can be described as a desire to work and achieve certain set goals despite the challenges faced. The motive then has to be so strong that regardless of the obstacles, one can carry on to achieve the expected outcomes. Persistence is a crucial ingredient in one's motivation to achieve the set-out goals Grover (2007) even though the goals and aims change along the way one must keep on (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). In the context of this study the set-out goal for a student enrolling for a programme is completion of their studies within the stipulated time. A study by Cloete and Mouton (2015) identified motives of students' enrollment the top five being; course content, and academic reputation of the

university. Employment prospects upon completion of the programme, relationship, and encouragement from academic supervisor. Clearly, students have personal and professional motives which may help them persist in the programme to completion (Hoskins and Golberg,2005).Committed students must be able to keep their motives alive throughout their studies regardless of the challenges experienced. This study will focus on the motives students had for enrolling in the masters programmes. It is important to establish this so as to identify then why the delays yet each student came in with a set of goals ready to achieve and so that the university can be able to adjust its programmes and policies in order to offer more support to the students to achieve their aims of enrollment.

### **2.3 Overview of Postgraduate Studies and Completion Globally**

The transition from an undergraduate degree to a masters program is an important step for any scholar, as it marks the beginning of specialization in a particular carrier path. Masters level marks the beginning of a walk in the world of academia and is where one should get the best support to be able to go through their studies and complete on time and move to other opportunities ahead or even proceed to PhD level. However, more often the student experiences delays and is not able to complete the program in the stipulated time of two years. Thus, the need to look into the issue of delayed completion because a delay in completion means a delay in the use of the skills and knowledge gained by the masters students which are useful both within the country and even beyond (Achoka, 2018). Any growing economy requires these skills for the prosperity and sustainability of all sectors of the economy (Friesenhahn, 2016). More importantly, expertise is needed right at the institutions of higher learning which keep growing through the high number of enrollments as witnessed in Kenyan universities recently (Mukhwana et al., 2016).

Postgraduate students are often motivated by a number of factors top among them is career progression (Ramogi, 2020). Therefore worldwide students of all kinds and backgrounds get enrolled in the programmes at universities. Some will enroll on full-time or part-time basis, and some are foreign students all of whom are different in age, profession, family responsibilities, gender but all have the required first degree and capabilities to pursue the course they enrolled in (Abiddin & Ismail, 2011). These differences also translate to the multiple experiences by the students, faculty members and the particular institutions where the students are enrolled in one being the failure of students to complete their studies within the stipulated time.

This is a concern in many countries in the world facing the challenge of delayed completion and attrition in their higher learning institutions and many researchers have conducted studies to establish reasons as to why is that the case and presented their results in terms of numbers through establishing the rates at which students complete or not complete their studies. A study in the US by Barefoot (2004) established that half of their students did not get to complete their studies. In the UK Cude (1989), informed that less than 4% of PhD students could manage to submit their theses for examination in the expected three years, 14.4% after 4 years, and 24.8% after 5 years. This shows that the percentage of those delaying keeps increasing beyond three years, therefore, confirming the challenge that exists. This study was conducted among PhD students which differs from this study as it will focus on the delay in completion among masters students.

Australian universities' case tends to be strict than most countries and particularly on PhD students who are funded to pursue their studies. Each country has its own way of conducting its programs even though they agree on the completion time. The only difference is that



how they ensure that delays in completion do not occur is completely up to institutions to put in place their measures and regulations. PhD candidates are expected to work within the given timelines failure to which no funds are given and it does not matter if the student requires more time or not; it is just the rule. Though this is seen as the best way to ensure completion on time it has also led to high attrition rates which differ from each program. Arts and Humanities experienced many students not completing their studies on time like almost half of the class while Sciences were much better as more students completed their studies because they were at 30-40% rate (Bourke et al., 2004; Elgar, 2003; Martin et al., 2001; Wright, T., & Cochrane, R. 2000). Some of the implications for non-completion in Australia include: Compromising the research program and future funding bid of the supervisor; Loss to the University associated with the recruitment and provision of necessary research infrastructure and supervision; reduced earnings of the university through Australian Federal Governments research training schemes since it is determined by postgraduate completion and through its contribution to various ranking for universities ( as cited in Ramogi, 2020).

Jiranek, (2010) opined that postgraduate completion and student satisfaction are becoming increasingly important in attracting students in a highly competitive, international, tertiary education sector since the students enroll and expect to be done in time to be able to make progress in their academic ladder. From the above literature, it is evident that completion of postgraduate programs is a global encounter in which each country strives to ensure it by the stipulated time but still, there are delays experienced which called for the researcher to conduct a study on delayed program completion among masters students in the selected public university.

## **2.4 Overview of Postgraduate Studies and Completion in Sub - Saharan Africa**

The postgraduate students' population has increased globally hence in sub-Saharan Africa and has come with its challenges which include high enrollments and low graduation rates per cohort, low research training and output, reduced funding, a mismatch between higher education and job market, brain drain, poor political commitment, recruitment and retention of faculty and the ever-growing undergraduate population as posited by these scholars (Achoka, 2018; Friesenhahn, 2016; Hayward & Ncayiyana, 2014; Mukhwana, Oure, Too, & Some, 2016).

However, this was not the case in the early years when Universities in the Sub-Saharan Africa were doing so well in terms of teaching and research because there were very few students and hence more attention was given to individual students. The governments gave a lot of support to this particular sector and so did donors and faculty members who paid close attention to policymaking that would ensure the success of postgraduate studies. Generally, the quality of academic life was at par with some of the best universities in the world like Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States (Sawyer, 2004). In the mid-1970s Sub-Saharan Africa experienced massive expansion in the education sector and more students enrolled in institutions of higher learning. Currently, however, this growth is facing challenges as noted by (Hayward & Ncayiyana, 2014). There is an increase in the number of Universities (both public and private) and enrollment rates add pressure to higher education institutions offering postgraduate studies to realize quality training and research (Ayiro & Sang, 2011; Bloom et al., 2006; Friesenhahn, 2016).

This growth in numbers is not at par with the physical planning in public universities as most of the universities were established in the 1960s and 1970s when few students were

being enrolled and expansions need to be done to accommodate the growing population (Achoka, 2018). According to Galt, (2013) development of research training in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been boosted through investment in Science, technology and innovation however, SSA still experiences low research output with regard to staff capacities, training capacities, and facilities (Friesenhahn, 2016). Only South Africa was ranked from Africa in the global top 50 in terms of research output and fewer African countries are ranked among the top 100 according to the global country ranking (Friesenhahn, 2016).

Some of the challenges faced by the postgraduate sector include poor research infrastructure, lack of well-equipped laboratories, libraries, adequate information and utilization systems, appropriate management systems, lecture halls and rooms; common policies that facilitate and support the research enterprise including incentives that recognizes and rewards high caliber research and institutional culture that is supportive of research and inquiry contributes to meagre research training at postgraduate level ( Achoka, 2018; Mouton, 2011). Notably, poor handling of research methodology is among the research challenges because it produces shallow knowledge and understanding by students in SSA leaving them without accomplishing innovative or imaginative rigor to present new ideas to present practice (Njihia &Kiende, 2018). Additionally, the lack of a high rate of collaboration and cooperation processes between and among Universities greatly hinders research findings making it difficult to access information which hinders the quest for shared visions, knowledge and achievements resulting in the duplication of 18 research findings making postgraduate students vulnerable to plagiarism (Achoka, 2018). It appears that each university is in a competitiverace yet forgetting the benefits that come with group

knowledge and research. Ideally, it should be like one university that has many campuses and they all benefit from each other.

Particularly in Kenya, faculty members too experience demanding teaching loads because of the growing student population in these institutions and low salaries which do not match the workloads, 'even the traditional support of teaching assistants, poor incentive systems, low promotions arising partly from the limited access to publishing outlets and international conferences and seminars/workshops due to financial constraints which leads to disheartening of many scholars at universities (Achoka, 2018; Hayward & Ncayiyana, 2014; Tettey, 2015).

Though there is an increase in investment in this sector, it is inadequate as it does not match the growth it is experiencing and that is why most African faculty members explore other lucrative opportunities outside Africa (Friesenhahn, 2016)

However, some African countries anticipate making good progress. In South Africa, the government intends to provide financial support to postgraduate students and increase the number of academic staff to improve supervision. This does not imply that they too do not face challenges. According to Rugut (2017), a shortage in funding for both students and institutions and lack of timely promotions of PhD holders brings about low institutional capacity.

According to Ayiro and Sang (2011), African Universities experience poor quality supervision due to few faculty members who are qualified to supervise students. The few available are also engaged in administrative duties at the universities and therefore little time is allocated for supervision.

To ensure that higher education institutions get to realize the timely progress of postgraduate students right from enrollment to graduation it is crucial to ensure that the students at the masters level get it right because this acts as the foundation for better performance at the Doctoral level. It is with this in mind that the study will delve into the masters students' experiences in relation to the delay in completion of their studies.

## **2.5 Overview of Postgraduate Studies Completion in Kenya**

The Education sector in Kenya has seen immense growth in the past ten years especially with the Kenya vision 2030 in place. This growth has been progressing since independence in 1963 as it was seen as a ticket to kick out poverty and ignorance in the society. Higher education too received immense support from the government with heads of state even having institutions named after them (Moi University, Kenyatta University) which indicated a great interest in the sector. To date, universities in Kenya have grown to 70 of which 38 are public and 32 are private. This shows the increasing demand for quality and relevant university programs, teaching and research for the increasing student population and economy. Incidentally, in 2007 there were 80,000 students in the Universities and now there are over 539,000 (Mukhwana et al., 2016). This growth has been further propelled by the support of the government in form of student loans by the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), Ministry of Education did increase the number of students qualifying for university education and the aim to achieve the Kenyan Vision 2030. Recently, more universities have been chartered and research funds have been allocated to the institutions and recently government-sponsored students have been placed in private universities too (Mukhwana et al., 2017).

However, there have been inefficiencies noted at the institutions of higher learning in terms of the quality and relevance of the programs offered (Martin & Stella, 2007). To address this through an Act of Parliament, Commission for Higher Education was changed to Commission for University Education (CUE) and given more mandate. “CUE has worked with universities and other stakeholders to develop regulations, standards and guidelines upon which various aspects of university education can be assessed and monitored, using peer-reviewed mechanisms. Both internal quality assurance (at the University) and External quality assurance (By CUE, or delegated to relevant professional bodies) are well institutionalized in the country, although the system still faces many challenges” stated Mukhwana et al., (2016).

With the growth in student population then comes the strain on the infrastructure and faculty members at the universities which were not expanded to cater for the student population (Gudo, Olel & Oanda, 2011). This translates to competition between facilities and the growth of the student population leading to students not receiving the kind of quality skills needed out here by the job market (Mukhwana et al., 2016).

There is need for employment of new staff to teach in these institutions and to supervise the postgraduate students without which the challenge of low graduation is witnessed as already is the case now. This is why each institution should really be very intentional on ensuring postgraduate students especially at masters level get the right attention and support in their studies so they can keep progressing well and graduate on time and join in the much needed members of faculty as tutorial fellows and graduate assistants. This way they help to ease the overload of teaching in the university. This also motivates them to work towards a doctoral degree. Kiamba, (2004) mentioned that enrollment rates do not match the

graduation rate as institutions are facing high dropout, delays in completion and attrition. One of the challenges being a serious shortage in teaching and research staff for instance 16,000 of the teaching staff are in these institutions however only 50% of them are PhD holders, how then can supervision of research students be achieved with such few faculty members? (Mukhwana et al., 2016). Meaning the demand for postgraduate students' expertise is higher than its production. Each institution gets to admit and process their students all the way to graduation. The basic admission requirement for a master's program is a bachelor's degree in relevant areas of second class and a recommendation letter from a predetermined category of referees. Masters Programs are designed to run for four semesters and the completion is pegged on approved timelines (Mukhwana et al., 2016). All Universities have coursework for master's students which include courses on research methodology and quantitative skills. No assessment of capacity to undertake the research is done with the assumption that a mandatory research methods course taken in the first year of study will fill the gaps, passing this course presupposes the capacity to undertake research work (Mukhwana et al., 2016). Njihia and Kiende (2018) noted that in Kenyatta university postgraduate students completed their coursework on time and delayed when it came to research work. This could be an indication that the teaching of research methodology course in most universities was wanting, it is more theoretical than practical and therefore most graduate students were not able to acquire the relevant skills and competencies that were critical (Mukhwana et al., 2016). The above literature demonstrates a state that needs more improvement from all the relevant stakeholders, because if the situation remains the same the student who is the most important consumer is affected negatively as these challenges translate too delays in completion and worst case scenario

being the non-completion. This poses the need for this study to explore experiences of students who have faced delays in their studies as it gives the end user; in this study is the masters student who still has more steps in the ladder to attain a doctorate degree.

## **2.6 Delayed completion of postgraduate Programmes**

As studied by many scholars there are factors that cause delay in completion of postgraduate studies. Among them are student related, supervisor- student relationship and institutional all of which have an impact on the student who is at the center of it all. A study by Jinarek (2010) noted three categories of factors that lead to timely completion of postgraduate studies as outlined below: first the quality and personal situation of the student including academic ability, financial situation, language skills, interpersonal skills and persistence verses self-sabotaging behaviors (Kearns, Gardiner and Marshall, 2008). Secondly, the nature and quality of supervision including the frequency of support from other students and research colleagues and the third group of factors include the resources and facilities available to the project, for example, cultural collection, analytical facilities, necessary expertise and all these components must come into play otherwise there will be non- completion of the degree. All aspects surrounding and within the student must collaborate to ensure completion of studies in time. As stated by Anderson, Guan & Koc, (2016) a student will be more effective if they could balance their social, psychological and scholarly education.

### **2.6.1 Student Related Factors**

Postgraduate students in all the universities are significantly diverse in terms of age, cultures, art-time or fulltime mode of study, financial capabilities, experience and abilities,



family and job demands and their ever changing needs over time and all these put a strain in their efforts to complete their studies on time (Abiddin & Ismail, 2011; Lindsay, 2013).

Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) identified the following factors to be related with completion demographic variable, personal attribute, motivation and goals, responsibilities and coping skills.

Demographic variables related to completion include age, gender ethnicity and marital status (Strayhorn, 2005; Wao and Onwuegbuzie, 2011). For female students being married and having children has been seen to be a likelihood to delay in completion of studies (Lindsay, 2013). Studies have shown different results on the influence of demographic factors on completion as expressed by the following researchers: men were more likely to complete on time than women; married students were more likely to persist/complete than the unmarried students (Price, 2006; Lott, Gardner and Powers, 2009). Personal attributes such as learning style, intelligence, admission interview, performance, personality and level of intrinsic motivation are positively associated with persistence (Lovitts, 2005). Student ownership of the dissertation requires independent thought and creativity especially in humanities since they tend to take an individual approach to research, while in sciences diligence and hard work is favored since they focus on team-based research (Earl-Novell, 2006; McAlpine and Norton, 2006). Student factors can have a positive influence or a negative influence at the same time. Negative Student factors are believed to contribute to delay in completion caused by frustration with slow academic progress and withdrawal from studies among others (Koen, 2007). A study Mukami and Wang'eri (2016), analyzed demographic data of students and linked it with high drop outs, examination retakes and deferments all of which contribute to delay in completion of the

studies and this study agrees with this study findings as demonstrated by other researchers too. Students who take exceptionally longer periods than the stipulated time pay emotional and personal losses (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). Similarly, Goble (2000) and Green and Kluever (2000) note that, failure to complete a doctoral programme, is not only painful and expensive for a student, but is also discouraging for the faculty involved, injurious to an institution's reputation and results in a loss of high-level research output( as cited in Rong'uno, 2016). Though this study was on doctoral students the same applies for masters student in fact it makes it even challenging for such students to progress to doctoral level because of prior experiences and this among other challenges could be the reasons as to why the output of PhD graduates in African Universities over the last 15 to20 years has dropped in Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (Rong'uno, 2016).

This study will explore the masters students' related factors in relation to delayed completion of their studies with an intention of giving them a voice through their own experiences and strategies to curb the delays.

### **2.6.2 Institution Related Factors**

These are factors that pertains to the particular institution where the degree is offered. Each university has a unique way of handling their postgraduate students and they can either encourage or discourage a student to complete their studies. Universities have an image to uphold and students as their clients who can either make it better or ruin it altogether. It would be important to evaluate the institution in terms of resources, academic departments and adequate staffmembers for both teaching and supervision. According to CGS (2009), institutional factors could be administrative in nature that is how students are selected for

particular programmes, student mentoring and the general study environment that is created by the institution.

Koen, 2007 the Dean of research in 1997 at the University of Western Cape(UWC)suggested that all candidates should have a powerful computer linked to the internet, the necessary laboratory equipment and research consumables; transport to research sites or archives; good-natured meeting place to discuss their work; access to an on-campus library of essential core materials; inter-library access for more specialist materials, support in the writing of grant application and a formal meeting with the supervisor, lasting at least forty minutes, once a month ( as cited in Ramogi, 2020).

The student should feel the support of the institution at every stage of their studies. Having given this literature, the study will seek to hear from the students and faculty members the strategies to curb the delays. Coming from those directly affected will be highly effective in solving the problem. For this study, supervision was considered as one of the institutional factors because it is the university that allocates and appoints student supervisors. This is usually done at the departmental level and further approved by the relevant postgraduate committee depending on the structure of postgraduate studies in a particular institution. For the case of the selected public University where the study was conducted, supervisors are usually appointed at the departmental level, and suggested names are forwarded to the Board of School of Graduate studies and then onward to the Senate for approval.

Student supervision is a crucial factor that can contribute to timely or delay in a master's student's studies. This is an area that has had the attention of many scholars as it is a broad topic that can be a research topic on its own as studied by Rugut (2017). The supervisor and supervisee should enjoy a good relationship for there to be timely completion of the

masters programme because a poor relationship can impede the timely completion of thesis writing (Earl, 2006). This is in agreement with earlier findings by Smith (1995) and (Tinto 1993) that the relationship a student develops with his or her advisor has a great impact on the student's research progress. This has been attested by many students in research by Barnes and Austin (2009) who concluded that students felt that the kind of mentorship received from a supervisor is crucial to the completion of a graduate programme. Some of the most successful students had supervisors who not only provided guidance but also the freedom and autonomy they needed to grow as scholars (Ray, 2007). Proper supervision, arrangements, timely feedback to students, advisor-advisee meeting frequency, good relationship and early start, are key pointers of a possible high rate and timely completion of thesis writing (Momanyi, 2022; Rong'uno, 2016). Similarly, the nature of advisor-advisee relationship, can greatly impact the students research progress.

Neradand Miller (1996) argue that poor advisor-student relationship impedes doctoral completion rates and time to completion. If a supervisor places the onus entirely on the student, the time to completion is prolonged (Earl, 2006). These studies suggest that the supervisor and supervisee should work as a team that has a major goal which is to complete the programme on time. If this can be achieved especially at masters level which is still the teething stage of research in the scholarly world then a student's progression is expected to be perfect. Other than creating a good rapport with one's supervisor the faculty should also ensure to match a student with a supervisor regarding a topic of interest. At the same time, supervisors can help their supervisees grow by working from students' individual strengths, demonstrating unconditional positive regard, by teaching resiliency and conflict-resolution skills, and by focusing on building students' positive self-image ( Zhao, 2007).

Further, it was reported that it also causes delays, especially at the thesis writing stage. The report noted that because of the poor faculty salaries, benefits, and teaching conditions, many senior professors have shifted over to externally and relatively well and more flexibly funded, project-oriented, research institutions which minimizes their teaching activities. Others get caught up in well-paying project developments or evaluation consultancies for national and international donors, agencies, and NGOs operating locally or elsewhere. Others have simply joined the international brain drain to Europe, United Kingdom, United States, or in recent years, to the Middle East- in some cases taking their best students with them. As a result, crucial and widely desired courses in theory, methods, proposal writing, agenda setting, philosophy, ethics, and politics of research are not getting taught to the depth required ( as cited in Ramogi, 2020).

All these factors cause delays in the completion of masters programmes notably, at the thesis writing stage.

### **2.6.3 Institutional Policy Related Factors**

Overall, postgraduate studies should have clear guidelines and standard procedures within which postgraduate matters are handled. This ensures the smooth running of postgraduate studies at all levels and the students and all stakeholders know their roles. The Postgraduate sector is dynamic and always growing hence the need for policy and legal frameworks and reforms which will cement and produce lasting positive transformations (Mukhwana, Too & Some, 2017). Each university in Kenya conducts postgraduate affairs in cognizance of the CUE guidelines as this is the body mandated to regulate postgraduate studies. In a study by Crosling & Thomas (2009), it was reported that programme processes influenced the completion of programmes. This study sought to establish how institutional policies can

influence delays in the completion of masters programmes in the context of the selected public University. It is crucial to look at processes involved in postgraduate studies whether they are complex or straightforward. In most African countries, draft proposals must go through a hierarchy of evaluations from supervisors, departments, faculties, and multi-disciplinary graduate committees whose members are often unfamiliar with or suspicious of the methods used in other disciplines. As a result, while university regulations generally claim that Master's degree or M. Phil, six to eight years seems far more common ( Eyangyu et al., 2014).Institutions should consider postgraduate studies as the nervecenter of their growth and development hence a policy governing the same should be accorded the seriousness it deserves.

## **2.7 Knowledge Gap**

The literature presented demonstrates what other researchers have done on the subject. The study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge in this area by exploringthe experiences of masters students in relation to delayed completion of masters programmes in the selected public university in Kenya. The knowledge gap is demonstrated in the context, sample and research design of the study therefore, this study intends to breach this gap by conducting the research in the context of selected University and a sample of masters students who have delayed to complete their studies and are in different stages of research process. As evident from the reviewed literature most studies leaned more on Doctoral students and more were keen on completion or non-completion rates.Hence this study inted to fill the population and knowledge gaps identified. The study adopted the qualitative approach hence filling the methodological gap as recommended by Wao and Onwuegbuzie (2010). This will be critical for the institution to examine ways of curbing

the delay in completion of master's programmes as it explores the student, supervision and institutional-related factors because completion is not as a result of one factor but the interaction of multiple factors as posited by Akparep et al., 2017; Eyangun et al., 2014; Noel et al., 2021; Ramogi, 2020; Rugut 2018; Tinto 1993, 1997 & 1998 hence the study sought to explore on delayed programme completion with these findings and those of other researchers.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter provided the theoretical perspectives on the completion of postgraduate studies globally, regionally, and even in Kenya. The following chapter explains the research design and methodology of the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the study was carried out under the following headings; research approach, the research paradigm, and research design. It also presents the context of the study by discussing the target population, sampling, data generation strategies and procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

#### 3.2 Research Approach

Research approaches are plans and procedures for research that outline the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Morteza & Sirous, 2015). There are three approaches to research that is qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Creswell, 2018). Qualitative and quantitative approaches are often seen as polar opposites however, this should not be the case instead, they should be perceived as different ends of a continuum and mixed methods is in between them (Creswell 2015; Newman & Benz, 1998). Another distinction between them is that qualitative approach uses words or oral data whereas quantitative approach uses numbers and mixed methods uses the two of them. This is in agreement with the definition of qualitative approach as an approach that explores and tries to have an understanding of individuals' perspective of a phenomenon. Goluboric (2015) also opines that it is an approach that the researcher gets verbal and written responses. Quantitative approach involves testing objective theories by looking at the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2018).



The choice of an approach involves a researcher's philosophical assumptions that he or she brings to the study and the nature of the research problem which also involves the specific research methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2018).

This study adopted a qualitative approach in order to understand the issues of delayed completion deeply into the participants' own experiences and how they can be solved. This gave the researcher the exact picture of the phenomenon using the views of the different participants in the study (Creswell 2014).

This approach was suitable for the study considering the several characteristics outlined by many authors (Sharma, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Shakouri, 2014; Padilla-Diaz, 2015; Creswell, 2018). They opined that a qualitative approach:

- Generates multiple forms of data using the multiple data generation strategies used by the researcher and so reports multiple realities of the phenomenon;
- The researcher seeks to understand and perceive the phenomenon under study by probing how they interpret it using their own experiences;
- The researcher is a key instrument because he or she enables data generation;
- Uses descriptive data in form of texts or words;
- Enables in-depth data which provides in-depth understanding of the phenomenon;
- Entails conducting research in natural settings where participants experience the phenomenon;
- Uses an inductive approach to generate data which establishes patterns and themes from bottom up and generates a theory using the gathered data;
- The researcher may bring with them their bias in a given study;

- Tends to answer the ‘why’ question which kind of elicit the attitudes and behavior of the participants;
- It emphasizes on the process rather than the end product;

The above characteristics are the strengths of the qualitative approach except for the researcher bias which is a weakness of the approach. Researcher bias is the perceptions or prejudices towards a phenomenon. This weakness of the study is mitigated by setting those perceptions and prejudices aside, this is referred to as bracketing, and this enables the researcher get the meanings of the participants (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

Therefore, this approach was suitable as the study aimed to answer ‘why’ masters students delay completing their studies by interacting with the participants through individual interviews and focus group discussions. Through this kind of interaction, the researcher was able to explore the phenomenon using their views as they candidly explained their experiences. This is in agreement with Barrat, Choi and Li (2011) who stated that qualitative is suitable for collecting data orally rather than numerically. For this reason, the researcher recorded the participants’ views and opinions using tape recorders and transcribed them before generating themes. This approach locates the paradigm discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 Research Paradigm**

A paradigm refers to a way of looking at the world and interpreting what is studied and therefore is an indication of how research ought to be conducted, by whom, and to what degrees (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Paradigm assumptions guide how the research can be done as it provides its standards for evaluating the quality of research and finally fully understanding the assumptions and techniques used which gives the researcher the

confidence to build on the strength and offset the weakness of those techniques (Rubin et.al, 2011). According to Creswell (2009), it is important for a researcher to be very clear on what research paradigm to use as it will influence the research framing and understanding of the social phenomenon. Other authors like Guba, 1990 and Creswell, 2013) refer to paradigms as worldviews which are general philosophical orientations about the world. Scotland (2012) referred to a paradigm as what reality is (ontology), the nature and form of knowledge (epistemology), how it is derived (methodology), and its value (axiology).

This is because every researcher gets to align themselves or their study to a particular worldview depending on the choice of approach they have chosen for the research study.

Research paradigm assumptions guide how the research can be done as it provides its own standards for evaluating the quality of research and fully understanding techniques to use in research which are more suitable to bring out strengths and offset weaknesses of an inquiry (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Creswell (2018) outlines the four worldviews as Post positivism, Constructivism, Transformative and Pragmatism. Creswell further informed that constructivism is often combined with Interpretivism as cited in (Kulakowska, 2020). For this study, the researcher has chosen to use the term paradigm as others have used (Lincoln, Lynhan & Guba, 2011; Mertens, 2010). This study is therefore situated in the Interpretivism paradigm which believes that reality is socially constructed through lived experience. It is subjective and multiple as it is expressed by participants' own views (Hennik, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

According to Neuman (2011), in order to understand the social world and the subjective meanings which are attached to it, Interpretivists favor interacting with people and having a dialogue with the research participants. The researcher's aim was to strive to understand and interpret the phenomenon through the eyes of participants and focus on how they give meaning of their lived experiences in specific contexts. Knowledge is generated inductively which is subjective in nature and acknowledges the fact that multiple realities exist and participants themselves define their social reality in regards to the phenomenon under study (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2007). This paradigm is, therefore, most appropriate as the researcher intends to get the views of participants on delayed completion among masters students. This paradigm informed the choice of design, sampling procedures, sample size, data generation strategies, analysis and interpretation which are discussed in the sections that follow. This will be the anchor through which research questions will be answered.

### **3.4 Research Design**

Creswell (2018) defines research designs as types of inquiry within the three approaches of research that outlines clear procedures to conduct a research study. It can be defined simply as strategies of an inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Having outlined the research approach of the study as qualitative, the researcher, therefore, selected a suitable design from those within the qualitative approach. Creswell and Potha (2018) outline that the following designs are viable to conduct qualitative inquiries; narrative, phenomenology, Ethnography, grounded theory and case study.

For this study, the researcher adopted a phenomenological research design. This is because the research design was considered best to inform the research methodology and in

answering the research questions. According to Creswell (2014), a phenomenological study is aimed at understanding human experiences and it requires the researcher to penetrate the individual's thoughts through interviews or extensive discussions. Consequently, interpretivists believe in multiple realities of their world and that reality is socially constructed and individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences with things and situations (Creswell, 2016). In this study, the researcher intended to listen to the participants and bring out what their multiples truths or realities were and this design was the most suitable to achieve its objectives. It enabled the participants to express freely their views in regard to the delayed completion of their studies. This way, the researcher could get to understand the factors that led to it, how it could be addressed, and what could be done differently with the stakeholders involved.

Unstructured interviews and focus group discussions were used to generate data as they are in line with the phenomenological design due to its philosophical underpinnings that require a researcher to penetrate the thoughts of participants through discussions on the phenomenon under inquiry.

A phenomenological design has its weaknesses a major one being the researcher's bias. Cohen et al. (2007) opines that phenomenological researchers should not allow their perspectives about the phenomenon under study to influence the findings of their research . To counter this weakness the researcher must set aside (bracket) all opinions, views, perceptions, understanding, judgments, or prejudices towards a certain topic in order to bring out an objective analysis of data gathered through the participants' own understanding of the topic ( Padilla-Diaz, 2015). In this study, I will bracket my own views

and opinions known to me about the delayed program completion among masters' students and the context of the study.

### **3.5 The Study Area**

This study was conducted in a selected public University in Kenya. It is located in Uasin Gishu County Kenya. It has fifteen schools in total offering diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The research was situated specifically in the School of Education which is a pioneer school in the particular University which currently has five departments namely: Education Technology, Educational Psychology, Education Management & Policy Studies, Curriculum, Instruction & Educational Media and Educational Foundation. The departments offer professional Education programs to all students from the undergraduate level, Postgraduate diplomas, master of education programs and Doctorate degree programs. In total, the school offer seven undergraduate programs, two postgraduate diplomas, twenty two masters and seven PhD programs. The choice of the selected public university was guided by it being one of the oldest and largest universities in Kenya in terms of student population and the programmes offered. The school of Education was purposively sampled among the other schools within the university because of its high student population at postgraduate level and particularly masters programmes where study participants were sampled.

### **3.6 Target Population**

The target population are the relevant individuals who the researcher finds fit to be part of the research study (Silverman, 2010). This study targeted master's students who have experienced delays in completion of their studies, Supervisors and the Dean School of Graduate Studies who are the policymakers at the university with regard to postgraduate

Studies. Masters students were targeted as it is a level of postgraduate studies where students are introduced into the world of research hence the presumption that exploring the phenomenon of delayed completion at this level would inform students even as they move to the PhD level of study. Further supervisors and Deans were targeted as it was important to have the experiences of those charged with the mandate of guiding and establishing policy for postgraduate studies in the university. It was also important that all the participants are given a chance for their voices to be heard with the aim of collaborative action informed by the results of this study.

### **3.7 Sampling and Sampling Procedure**

A sample is a smaller group of the whole population that has the relevant information or understanding of the phenomenon and who is a representative of the total population (Cohen et al., 2007). Sampling is, therefore, the process through which individuals or sampling units are selected from the sample frame (Martinez – Mesa, Gonzalez-Chia Bastos, Bonamigo and Duquia, 2016). It is the selection of elements in a population for their participation in research (Bingham & O’Leary, 2014). The sampling strategy needs to be very specific from the beginning of every research study because the sampling method may affect the sample size estimation which may lead to biased results (M. Krause, W Lutz & J R Boehnke, 2011). A researcher will get to select participants from the population who are deemed to be insightful and will highly inform the study. Sample size of a study would depend on the purpose and nature of the population under study (Creswell, 2013). However, researchers usually consider factors such as cost, time and accessibility in conducting research hence cannot use the whole population to get information (Cohen et al., 2007). This necessitates the researcher to do a sampling of the whole population.

There are two major techniques of sampling that is probability sampling, used in quantitative research which gives every individual in the target population an equal chance of being part of the sample and non-probability sampling that is used in qualitative research, where participants are deliberately selected by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007). This study was located in interpretivist paradigm and the phenomenological design hence adopted non-probability sampling techniques specifically purposive sampling and snowball sampling. This is in accordance to Padilla-Diaz (2015) who opines that in a phenomenological design, participants are selected using purposive sampling. The participant is also expected to meet certain criteria so as to enable the researcher understand the phenomenon under inquiry (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling allows the researchers to use cases that have the required information concerning the study's objectives. In this case the researcher's judgment is crucial in selecting participants. For this study the Dean School of Graduate Studies was selected as he was deemed to better inform the research because the School is in charge of postgraduate studies in the University. With this kind of experience of dealing with many students from all the schools in the University, the participant was seen to be rich with information concerning the phenomenon under study. For the supervisors, the researcher used a homogeneous sample of supervisors in the School of Education. A homogeneous sample is where individuals or sites are selected based on membership of a sub-group that has defining characteristics. They were selected on the basis that they have attained the position of senior lecturer and above because at this position one is able to supervise students at both masters and PhD level. This was informed by the assumption that at this level a supervisor has had many students to supervise some to completion and others in progress at both levels of



postgraduate studies. To get this population the researcher with the assistance of the supervisor requested for their contacts from the office of postgraduate studies in the School of Education. This is where the advantage of using purposive sampling came in handy. The researcher took note of the accessibility and willingness of participants to take part in the study and their ability to communicate opinions, perspectives and experiences in a clear, open and reflective manner (Etikan et al., 2016). The researcher contacted them through emails and phone calls to seek their consent to participate in the study and plan on the interview dates depending on their agreed time and location. For the masters students, the researcher used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to a sampling technique in which the researcher purposively selects initial research participants, the selected participants will then lead the researcher to others that they know who have the required characteristics (Creswell, 2012). Snowball technique was used because the masters students were not in the University hence this population was away in different parts of the country. The initial participants' contact information was sought from the postgraduate office in the School of Education and the the school of Graduate studies representatives from the departments in the school. Those contacted then led the researcher to those that they knew some of whom were cohort members or classmates who had experienced delays in the completion of their studies. The masters' students participated in a focus group discussion that consisted of 10 master's students from the five departments in the School of Education. Ramogi (2020), conducted a study in the School of Education on experiences masters' students in their research journey and used individual interviews and questionnaires. The study findings of her study informed the use of focus group discussions with the students who have experienced delays with the intention to involve them in a

group discussion and get their multiple realities. This study differs from that of Ramogi (2020) because it sought to dwell on delayed programme completion and specifically sample masters students who have experienced delays and are yet to complete their studies unlike those sampled in her study who were in the final stages of completion of their programmes. The choice to sample participants with this characteristic is to deeply understand the root cause of the delay and at what stage they are in and the kind of support required to mitigate this phenomenon. Below is a summary of the criteria used by the researcher to select cases that participated in the study (See Table 1).

**Table 1 Summary of selection criteria of participants**

Target	Criteria	Sampling technique
Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be in charge of postgraduate studies in the university.</li> <li>• Must be the Dean at the School of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposive</li> </ul>
Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have attained the position of senior lecturer, associate professor or full professor.</li> <li>• Must be from the school of Education and belongs to either of the departments within the school.</li> <li>• Must have taught and supervised at least five postgraduate students to completion in the school.</li> <li>• Must be supervising students or have supervised students who have taken longer than the stipulated time to complete their studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposive</li> </ul>
Masters students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be from the school of Education and belongs to either of the departments within the school</li> <li>• Must be undertaking a masters degree and has stayed in the school for more than stipulated time of two years.</li> <li>• Must have completed course work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowball</li> </ul>

The data collection strategies used to get on each category of participants is as discussed below.

### **3.8 Data Collection Strategies**

The following two data collection strategies were used in this study namely; in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion.

#### **3.8.1 Interviews**

According to Kabir (2018), an interview is a form of data collection method whereby the researcher asks participants questions related to the study and gets their responses. This is in agreement with (Kwale, 1996) who states that, an interview is an exchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. It is a process of face-to-face communication where one person tries to get information from the other to produce knowledge (Flannery, et al., 2023)

Sharma (2010) alludes that interview is a major source of qualitative data for a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study. Further, he suggests that it is a dialogue that offers an opportunity for the researcher to elicit information from participants in order to hear their views. In the same vein, interviews are used in a qualitative research to elicit data that is related to participants' lived experiences and perceptions through their own narrations (Tenny et al., 2022). According to Bevan (2014), phenomenological research relies on interviews that are open-ended and semi-structured in nature. These types of interviews are used to give room for the research participants to explain themselves candidly and at their own pace making the researcher be able to get rich information concerning the phenomenon. Interviews are not just for casual purposes but with an aim of making meaning of the gathered data therefore, they can be structured, unstructured or

semi-structured (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Flick, 2022). This study used semi-structured interviews to gather data from the supervisors and the Deans. Semi-structured interviews provide in-depth information about a phenomenon (Sharma, 2010). It enables the use of multisensory channels of communication that is verbal and non-verbal to generate data. The researcher is at will to also seek clarifications if need be and to take control of the direction of the conversation (Creswell, 2018). Even with the advantages above, interviews also have challenges. The researcher may ask leading questions because they want the participant to answer in a particular direction. This then leads to getting information that is not authentic hence acquiring bias information. Similarly, it is time-consuming and requires skills and resources to facilitate (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). To counter these challenges, the researcher bracketed her own opinions and perceptions on delayed completion of masters programmes and the context of the study to allow participants to give their honest opinions with as little as possible influence from me. The researcher also ensured professionalism and allocated enough resources to conduct the interviews. Barbour and Schostak (cited in Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019) indicated that the researcher should use a language and vocabulary that is well understood by the research participants, he or she should also be a keen listener to ask for clarification where necessary and also probe to get more information.

The researcher first introduced herself to the research participant and informed them about the study and requested the participants' consent to be interviewed and to record the session. The participants were allowed to read through the consent form and sign it. The research began by asking one main question which was then followed by probing and clarification questions. This type of interview allowed the participants to express

themselves freely and at their own pace.. Data was recorded using a sound recorder and safely stored later it was transcribed in preparation for analysis.

### **3.8.2 Focus Group Discussions**

Cohen et al., (2007) define focus group discussions as a group interview. This particular method is useful when participants are knowledgeable about the phenomenon and can freely express themselves. This then generates multiple perspectives about the topic of inquiry. Focus group discussions are collaborative discussions among participants about a specific topic (Silver, 2005). The researcher used FGD with a group of ten masters' students. This group of participants was based on the sampled individuals. After contacting them and agreeing on the date and time of the discussion, the researcher went ahead to conduct the FGD. Considering that these participants were students who were already off-campus, the researcher conducted this FGD online using zoom at the agreed time with the participants. Considering that these participants are teachers and it was during the school term session, they all agreed that the FGD be conducted over lunch break. The researcher did send a zoom link to all participants a few hours prior to the FGD session. Before the session, the researcher had a chance to inquire from all the participants if they were familiar with the Zoom platform which they confirmed they were since most of them had been using it with school meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher also requested the participants to sign and send back the consent form before the session. Once each participant had logged in the FGD session began with introductions and the discussion went on for the agreed time of one hour.

One of the limitations of FGD is that some participants may dominate others during the discussion. This was addressed by the researcher by ensuring that each participant gets an

equal chance to contribute in the discussion, giving instructions at the beginning of the discussion and using probes for those that seem not to speak much. The FGD was guided by a set of questions drawn from the objectives of the study which the researcher used as probes during the discussion so as to gather data from the participants. The researcher allowed the respondents to interact and share their experiences freely and the whole discussion was audio recorded for analysis.

### **3.9 Data Analysis Procedures**

Due to the nature of the study, the researcher found it appropriate to use two strategies to gather data as explained in the previous section. Thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke was used to analyze the gathered data from the study participants. Braun & Clarke (2006) explained that thematic data analysis is a technique in which a researcher identifies, examines and records patterns within the data. The researcher followed the six (6) steps of thematic data analysis by (Braun et al., 2006).

The researcher first familiarized herself with the data, listened to the audio records of both interviews and focus group discussions in order to transcribe the data and come up with the main ideas expressed by study participants. Then, the generation of codes and a coding system at this level the names of the research participants were replaced by pseudonyms. Thirdly, the researcher identified the themes. To do this, the generated codes were used to come up with the potential themes by collating all data that was relevant to each potential theme. Fourthly, the researcher then reviewed the themes to be sure that the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set hence generating a thematic map analysis. Fifth, the themes were defined and named. The particulars of each theme were refined to generate a clear definition for each of them. Lastly, the researcher produced a

report. This final step involved selecting compelling extracts examples and final analysis of the selected extracts relating back to the analysis of the research question in order to produce a report (Braun et al., 2006).

### **3.10 Measures of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a way in which researchers can persuade themselves and their readers that the research findings and arguments made based on the results are strong and truthful and are worthy of attention (Lincon and Guba, 1985). It helps to ensure that researchers generate deep understanding of the participants' perspectives with regard to a particular topic (Taylor, 2014).

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study is done on the following criteria transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

#### **3.10.1 Transferability**

According to Polit & Beck (2012), transferability relies on the reasoning that the findings can be generalized or transferred to other groups in a similar setting. Li (2004) asserts that transferability in qualitative research involves not just describing the research participants' behavior and experiences but also giving a rich description of their contexts so that their behavior and experiences become meaningful to a person reading the research work. In the same vein, Creswell (2009) posits that giving a detailed description makes the research results more realistic. This means that the readers are transported to the research setting and enabled to share an experience with the research participants and this enables the readers to make transferability judgments themselves. Bitch (2005) emphasizes that transferability in research is done by thick description. In this study, the context, participants, and the research process were described in detail so that those who seek to



transfer the findings can make their own judgments of whether the findings are transferable (Lincon & Guba, 1984; Creswell, 2014).

### **3.10.2 Confirmability**

In qualitative research, confirmability refers to the level of confidence that the research findings are based on the participants' narratives and are not based on the researcher's biases (Tobin & Begley 2004). It also refers to the objectivity of the research during data collection and analysis. Polit and Beck (2012) argue that there is a need for congruence between two or more independent persons regarding the accuracy, relevance, and meaning of data. Confirmability can be achieved through a reflexive journal, audit trail, and triangulation. In this study, the researcher adopted an audit trail as a means of ensuring confirmability. Audit trails are an in-depth approach that the researcher uses to illustrate the collected data and ensure it is based on the participants' narratives (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher ensured that the narratives of the participants in the audios were similar to the transcriptions by checking them side by side that is listening to the audios and reading the transcripts. There was proper record keeping of the raw data gathered and records of the data analysis.

### **3.10.3 Credibility**

According to Polit and Beck (2014), the credibility of the study refers to the confidence in the truth of the study and therefore the findings and it is the most important criterion for establishing quality in qualitative research. There are various techniques that a researcher can use to establish credibility these are; extended engagement with participants, persistent observation, triangulation, peer examination, member check, audit trail and reflective journaling (Connelly, 2016). In this study, the researcher used member checking which

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as a technique that a researcher continually tests with the research participants the researcher's data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions. The researcher did a final member check with the key participants of the study to ensure that the report and conclusions of the results reflected the research participants' responses accurately. This was done by allowing participants to read the transcribed work and also listen to recorded audios to ensure that it was exactly what they shared about the topic under study.

#### **3.10.4 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings (Moon et al., 2016). They explain that the research procedure and findings should be well documented in order to allow someone from outside the research to be able to follow, audit and critique the research process. Dependability is an important measure of trustworthiness in qualitative research as it establishes the research findings as consistent and repeatable. Similarly, Shenton (2004), opines that it is the extent to which data gathered and the research findings can be replicated. In this study, the researcher used the external audit technique which Bowen (2009) explains involves an external researcher examining the data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation to ensure that they are accurate and that the research findings are supported by the data collected. This was crucial to make sure that if another researcher looks over the data, their findings, interpretation, and conclusions would be similar to those of the researcher in this study. To ensure this, the researcher followed the guidance of the supervisors and followed every step of the research process from fieldwork to data presentation. In addition, all data files were kept to ensure that it can be traced.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical consideration is very crucial in research as it upholds the dignity of the research participants and the information that the researcher is going to publish (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011). The researcher was aware that ethical considerations must be upheld to ensure that the research was done in a manner that did not compromise the research participants. The following are some of the ethical considerations that were upheld by the researcher;

#### **3.11.1 Informed Consent**

According to Kumar (2011), informed consent implies that research participants should be made adequately aware of the nature of the information that the researcher wants from them and the reason why the researcher wants that information, what purpose it will be put to, how they are expected to participate in the study, and how it will directly or indirectly affect them. In this study, before undertaking data collection, the researcher informed the research participants about the study and the purpose of undertaking the research for them to make decisions on whether they would participate in the research or not. The participants were required to sign consent forms before the commencement of data collection to ensure there was evidence of their consent. Before the beginning of the interview sessions participants were given consent forms to sign and their consent to record the interview sessions was sought. The consent forms and audios were stored safely. The masters students who participated in the FGD were also provided with the consent forms through emails and whatsapp for them to read and sign before the commencement of the FGD.

### **3.11.2 Confidentiality**

According to the British Sociological Association (2017), researchers should ensure that they protect information or views disclosed to them by research participants and the researcher should also make judgments on what to be included in the research and what should remain private. In this study, the researcher ensured that information disclosed by the participants was treated as private by not disclosing it to anyone and storing it safely.

### **3.11.3 Anonymity of Participants**

The research participants participate in the research with the assumption that they will remain anonymous unless they have consented that they should be exposed (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). In this study, the researcher did not disclose the names of the research participants and used pseudonyms to hide their identities during data presentation.

### **3.11.4 Voluntary Participation**

Marshall et al., (2014) opine that research participants should only participate in research voluntarily. They should not be bribed or forced to participate in the research. In this study, the research participants were not subjected to any coercion for them to take part in the research.

In addition, the researcher was given an introductory letter from the university where the researcher was a student. This was used to seek a permit to conduct the study from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). These documents have been attached in the appendix section of this thesis as evidence of the proper procedures the researcher followed during the research process.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

The chapter began with a brief overview of the qualitative research approach that was adopted for the purposes of this study. The chapter provided an outline of the research design, research paradigm, study area, target population, a description on how the sample was selected, data collection strategies, data analysis processes, issues of trustworthiness of the research and ethical measures that were upheld throughout and after the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to explore masters' students and supervisors' experiences on completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya. In this chapter, I present and discuss findings from the research questions as generated by the gathered data and conceptualize the discussion within literature.

#### **4.2 Description of Participants**

The research was conducted in one of the public universities in Kenya and particularly in the School of Education. The participants included; Masters' students who had been registered for more than the stipulated time of two years and had not completed their studies, and supervisors in the school of education among them were two deans that is, one from the school of education and another from the school of Graduate studies.

The researcher used focus group discussion and unstructured interviews to gather data from the masters students and supervisors respectively. The tables below show the biographic information of the participants (Table 2 and Table 3)

**Table 2: Masters students**

Name (pseudonym) <i>Respondent</i>	Age (years)	Gender	Duration (years enrolled)	Status
R1	35	Female	2015 – 7year	Proposal
R2	38	Female	2016 – 6	Proposal
R3	36	Female	2015- 7	Thesis writing
R4	40	Male	2017 – 5	Proposal
R5	39	Male	2016 – 6	Data analysis
R6	40	Female	2015 – 7	Proposal
R7	38	Male	2016 – 6	Proposal
R8	39	Male	2016- 6	Data collection
R9	43	Male	2015 – 7	Proposal
R10	41	Female	2015 – 7	Proposal

**Table 3: Supervisors**

Name (pseudonym) ( <i>Key Informant</i> )	Designation	Teaching experience	Gender
KI 04	Dean/Professor/supervisor	Over 30 years	Male
KI 05	Senior Lecturer/supervisor	Over 18 years	Female
KI 08	Senior Lecturer/supervisor	Over 13 years	Female
KI03	Senior Lecturer/supervisor	Over 18 years	Male
KI 01	Dean/ Professor/supervisor	Over 25 years	Male
KI 09	Senior Lecturer /supervisor	Over 15 years	Female
KI06	Senior Lecturer /supervisor	Over 15 years	Male
KI02	Associate Prof./supervisor	Over 25 years	Male
KI 07	Senior Lecturer /supervisor	Over 10 years	Male

The data gathered for this study was analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of analyzing qualitative data. In order for the researcher to arrive at the themes the following was done; organization and familiarization with the data which involved listening to the audios and transcription of the same. Then coding was done by going back to the transcripts and looking for similarities in the participants' narratives and searching for themes within the data gathered through clustering similarities and grouping them into categories. Then reviewing of themes to ensure they all were recorded and grouped together. Finally, the researcher defined and named the themes to give focus and scope of each theme. Finally, the report was written by weaving together the data extracts, analytical narratives and discussing them together with the existing scholarly literature. Ten themes



emerged and are discussed in the sections below under each research objective and question of the study.

### **4.3.1 Motives for Enrolling for Masters Programmes**

The first objective of this study was to explore the motives of masters students' enrolling for masters' programmes in the selected public university. The research question that guided the data gathering of this objective was: *What are the motives for enrolling in a masters programme in the selected public university?* Data was gathered by conducting a focus group discussion with ten masters students. The findings showed that most students had enrolled for their masters studies because of professional and personal growth. This was expressed in one theme that is, professional progression. Participants expressed their motivation to progress in their professions under three categories; promotion and salary increment, employment prospects and prestige gain.

#### **4.3.1.1 Theme one: Professional Progression**

Professional progression in the context of this study is the advancements one makes in their profession. Participants in this study expressed that their aim of pursuing a master's degree was so that they can grow in their profession as teachers. According to their employer Teacher Service Commission, an added degree would mean that one has made steps towards the next grade of promotion (TSC, CPG 2016). This theme was further explained in three categories: promotion and salary increment, employment prospects, and gaining academic prestige.

##### **4.3.1.1.1 Promotion and Salary Increment**

Promotion in this context means moving to a higher position in one's profession and salary increment means the monetary addition that comes with a promotion. Participants

expressed that their main motivation to enroll for the master's degree was to be promoted by TSC to better job grades which had better pay than the one previously held as expressed the following remarks;

*“For me I was so eager to pursue my masters because I wanted to apply for promotion to teach in a Teachers’ Training College” R1, 27/05/2022*

*“You see, as a teacher the more certificates you have the more you will earn and especially when you want to be promoted” R5, 27/05/2022*

*Hmmmm... I think we are all seeking better pay in our profession” R9, 27/05/2022*

From the participants’ quotations, it is evident that as professionals they were seeking to be promoted and earn a higher salary. People often want a higher salary because of the economic status and freedom it brings. As the economic times change people often want to grow their economic status as well. This finding agrees with Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) who opined that professional motives include career advancement in terms of eligibility for promotion and a raise in salary. This is undoubtedly a motive for most people who are employed and are seeking to advance in their studies. Literature shows that one must be able to keep their motivation alive until their goal is achieved hence the definition of motivation as a desire to work and achieve set goals despite challenges faced (Wao and Onwuegbuzie, 2011). In this context, the set goal is the completion of the masters degree on time. Ayub et al., (2017) remarked that whatever the motives the student has, they all have an implication on the completion of their studies based on the dedication and effort put into pursuing the programme.

#### **4.2.1.1.2 Employment Prospects**

Employment prospects in this study context refer to one's potential to apply for certain job positions. Participants in this study had the motivation to enroll for their masters

programmes because upon completion it would give them a higher chance to qualify for higher positions in their profession. They had the following to say:

*“I decided to enroll in this programme because I was looking at the future of my profession. So that the certificate I get will enable me qualify for higher positions. It sells you when you put it in your CV” R2, 27/05/2022*

*“For me am under the TVET, because it was revived by the government, I knew many developments would come and so once I have the masters then you can apply for the jobs advertised” R4, 27/05/2022*

From the preceding quotations, it is evident that the participants were enrolling for masters programmes because they wanted to increase their chances of employability. Many participants felt that acquiring a masters degree would give them higher chances of being employed at higher positions and that upon completion of their studies, the qualification in their Curriculum Vitae would be added advantage during their career progression. According to TSC terms of service under promotions and appointments, one is considered for a promotion based on the years of experience and the qualifications they have with masters and PhD being one of the key factors that earn one a promotion. This finding partly agrees with a study in China by Di & Wen(2014) who reported that students enrolled for postgraduate programmes with the desire to gain knowledge and get decent employment. By embarking on a masters programme, one gets to develop their skills in whatever field that they pursue hence it is crucial to complete the programme without any delays. These skills are crucial to the masters student as an individual and the society at large because once one is skillfully equipped they can benefit the society by rendering service in the skills they have acquired(Mukhwana et al., 2016).

#### 4.2.1.1.3 Gaining Prestige

Gaining prestige in this study refers to the status elevation that comes with earning a masters degree. This means one feels fulfilled as it is a way of self-development. A masters degree also sets the stage for enrolling for a PhD which comes with a title. So one is motivated to enroll for a masters programme with the aim of climbing up the ladder in the academic ranks and titles. It earns one a reputation in society (Amani et al., 2022).

Participants expressed the following with regard to gaining prestige:

*“Another reason why I enrolled was that, when people hear you have gone back to school, there is some kind of high regard they give you hahahah .... Especially if in your workstation you became among the few to attain a masters degree” R10, 27/05/2022*

*“It feels good to just have an added degree to your name, so I said why not” R8, 27/05/2022*

*“Other than for my development as a career person it was also important for me especially because now I was a principal and the junior teachers had enrolled too, I needed to gain a reputation too and keep myself at the top” R9, 27/05/2022*

From the participants' remarks, it can clearly show that enrolling for a masters programme brought them some kind of reputation compared to their peers and colleagues at their workstations. Some had the aim to go all the way to acquire the titles that come with academic progression. Enrolling for masters programmes acted as a stepping stone towards achieving the goal of gaining academic titles like being called a 'doctor' and ultimately a 'professor'. These findings agree with Amani et al., (2022) findings which revealed that students were motivated to pursue a postgraduate degree because of better salary, employment progression, and personal development and for prestige or reputation. In the same vein, Tavid (2014) found that students who enrolled for PhD aimed to learn more about how to conduct research because they wanted to progress in their careers and obtain

social status, though it differs from this study because it focused on PhD students yet the current study sampled masters students as participants.

#### **4.3.2 Masters Students' Perceptions on Factors Influencing Delayed Completion of their Studies**

The second objective of this study was to explore the masters students' perceptions of factors influencing the delayed completion of their studies. A focus group discussion was used to collect data from ten masters students. The research question that provided answers for this objective was: *what are the perceptions of masters students on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies?* From the data collected during the focus group discussion with the masters students three themes emerged student personal factors and supervision-related factors.

##### **4.3.2.1 Theme Two: Student-Related factors**

Student-related factors are those that pertain to an individual masters student. In this study, the students were expected to express their personal factors that have caused the delay in their studies. Masters students ideally should take two years or four years if registered as part-time students. However, the students in this study had all taken more than the required time of four years to complete their studies because they had registered as part-time students. They had registered under the school-based program, where they would take their coursework during school holidays as they are teachers employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). According to the masters' students' issues had come between them and completing their studies expressed in the following three categories namely; employment responsibilities, financial constraints, and Social challenges.

#### 4.3.2.1.1 Employment Responsibilities

Employment responsibilities refer to all the duties generally incumbent on an employee of a certain organization. They are responsibilities one is expected to perform when under employment. These participants are all teachers employed under Teacher's Service Commission (TSC) in Kenya. In this study, most of the masters students expressed that employment responsibilities had taken most of their time, and were not able to complete or concentrate on their studies to finish on time. During the focus group discussion with the masters students they expressed that in the course of their studies, some had been transferred to new working stations an exercise known as delocalization by their employer; the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC). Some had been promoted to become principals or deputy principals hence increasing their responsibilities. With the new changes of having to move to a new workstation and adjusting to taking up the roles of their promotions, it took time to settle down and get back to their studies as evident in the following quotation:

*" I joined the program then shortly after I became a Principal. Later on, I was delocalized to Vihiga County from Siaya County, and settling became a challenge. So, from that time to date, to say the truth, I have not embarked on it. That has been my challenge." R9, 27/05/2022*

*"You see when you are employed in a very far town from Eldoret where the university is located, sometimes it takes long to plan and come and see your supervisors or follow up on your academic work, because you cannot be given permission to be away from school for more than three days without a valid explanation" R2, 27/05/2022*

Another student opined that:

*"One has to really make an effort to balance studies and work responsibilities"*  
*R10, 27/05/2022*

From the above quotations, it is evident that masters students were experiencing delays due to the work responsibilities they had at their workstations. However, they could not abandon their employment because it is their source of livelihood as expressed in the following remarks:

*“Your job is the one that gives you school fees and means for survival. So you cannot choose to leave it and pursue completing your studies. Then in some way, your academics lag behind as it is the easiest to let go when the pressure is too much” R6, 27/05/2022*

From the remarks above, it is evident that masters students' delay in completion was contributed to their employment responsibilities and that they could not leave their jobs to continue with studies. Leaving or resigning would mean the loss of their source of livelihood. There was no balance between their studies and their job obligations which made them to delay completion of their studies in their studies. Research (Amani, J., Myeya, H., & Mhewa, M. (2022); Mukwana et. al., 2016) has shown that students who are not on any form of scholarship may encounter delay in their studies because they have to work to be able to provide for themselves and at the same time cater for their studies. However, those on scholarships have been shown to complete their studies at about 25% sooner than those without scholarships.

#### **4.3.2.1.2 Financial Constraints**

Financial constraints are factors that inhibit one from being able to meet a financial obligation in this case school fees for the registered masters' student. In this study, some students expressed that at some point in their studies they were struggling to pay their school fees and they had to miss a semester or two or sometimes even an examination. One participant narrated:

*“I remember one time I missed sitting for two examination papers because I was not able to pay my school fees on time, but when I got the money I paid the fees and I was allowed to continue with the rest of the examinations. I was really happy that the school was so understanding because I would have missed a whole semester. However, I had to wait for the group behind me to be able to sit for the exams I missed” R5, 27/05/22*

Another said:

*“Sometimes having many financial obligations can put strain on ones’ funds. For me I have a family and when you try to balance what you have and the family responsibilities sometimes it becomes a challenge especially now that we are teachers and our salary really is not much mmmmmh.... I remember we were told to ensure we clear certain percentage of fees I really cannot remember how much it was, it has been so long, before we presented proposals. At that time I was not able to pay so I had to wait for sometimes when I could pay to go on with the proposal” R1, 27/05/2022*

From the quotations above, it is evident that masters students had some financial challenges though they managed to find a way of dealing with them. Moreover, they had to delay their studies until they were able to pay the school fees for them to move to the next level of their studies. Masters students are mostly privately sponsored students and sometimes they are unable to pay their school fees on time because they also have other financial commitments other than their own school fees.

This is evident in the following quotation expressed by a participant:

*“Me I have a family, that means I also pay school fees for my children and other financial needs at home” R5, 27/05/2022.*

These findings echo what other scholars like Amani et al., (2022), Ramogi (2020), and Jiranek (2010) reported that the financial situation of a postgraduate student can contribute to timely or late completion. This suggests that this is an important aspect of a postgraduate student that should be considered even before enrolling in the programme. As suggested in



previous studies (Thomas, 2019; Van de Schoot et al., 2013; Pitch forth et al., 2012) that among the characteristics of the candidates for postgraduate studies is the financial status of the student as it will determine the amount of time taken in their studies. Without financial capability, one will be subjected to experiencing delays in completion due to the financial obligations entailed in postgraduate studies that is school fees payment and finances to conduct research.

#### **4.3.2.1.3 Social Problems**

Social problems refer to challenges that affect a student's social life and hence cannot carry on with their normal lives unless the matter is resolved. Among the social challenges expressed by masters students were: sickness and family responsibilities. These challenges hindered the timely completion of masters students' studies as remarked by the following participants:

*“In 2018 I got an accident. So, I used to seek medication for some lengthy period. So, when I came back, it is like, I didn't get back to it immediately. But I got back to it and I am preparing to defend proposal” R9, 27/05/2022*

Another participant reported that family responsibilities were a challenge to her:

*“For me when I began I had young family, and that means my children were pretty young, So when I completed coursework it took me a long time to even come up with my proposal because of the responsibilities of taking care of young children” R2, 27/05/2022*

From the above quotations masters students expressed the social issues that came in between them and completion of their studies. These challenges were inevitable and they had to first address them and get back to their studies later. For instance sickness is something that happens to anyone and indeed it gets in the way of ones' plans and studies. Family obligations especially for the female students often get overwhelming when one is

a student because of the task of taking care of young children and pregnancy that at times happens in the course of ones studies.

These findings agree with a study done in South Africa by Motseke (2016) who opined that postgraduate students with families spent most of their time carrying out their family obligations and hence could not sufficiently focus on their studies. This suggests that striking a balance between academic and social responsibilities is a challenge and hence contributes to delayed completion of their studies.

#### **4.3.2.2 Theme Three: Supervision Challenges**

Supervision challenges are the difficult circumstances masters students experienced with their allocated supervisors that did contribute to their delay in their studies. Supervision during masters is very crucial as it determines how the student's progress will be (Mkhwana, et al., 2016). The student-supervisor relationship should be conducive to motivating the student throughout their research journey. However, for the participants in this study, that was not the case as they found that the supervision process was not very easy because they faced many challenges concerning engagement with their supervisors during their research journey. In this theme, participants pointed out their challenges and the researcher categorized them as follows; Accessibility of supervisors, slow feedback from supervisors and lack of consensus among supervisors,

##### **4.3.2.2.1 Accessibility of Supervisors**

Accessibility of supervisors refers to how easy for the students to contact, meet and approach their supervisors during the time of the research process. Right from the time the students are allocated supervisors, they are supposed to begin their interaction for the

purpose of the research process. The respondents in this study found it challenging to reach to their supervisors as evident in the following quotations;

*“I would not mention a name but I didn't like the way my supervisor treated me. Many times I would call to inform him that my work was ready, he'll not pick calls and later he would not call back. So you are left stuck not knowing how to proceed” R3, 27/05/2022*

*“Actually, I don't know the right term to use but he would be so mad to me that why did I have to call him. He once told me “I am your superior, I should be the one to call you, not you calling me.” And when you now don't call him, he will end up not calling you completely” R6, 27/05/2022*

*“I would sometimes travel all the way to Eldoret, main campus and end up not meeting with the supervisor” R8, 27/05/2022*

From the participants' quotations, it is clear that they did not get access their supervisors as often as they needed and this concurs with Ramogi (2020) who noted that 55% of the respondents in her study agreed in varying degrees to not receiving the maximum contact with their supervisors. This puts a strain on the student who might not know how to proceed because he or she is left in isolation. One participant said;

*“No I had two, yes they were two, but the other one I never saw her at all.” R10, 27/05/2022*

Another added:

*“Earlier on, there is this notion that actually in this university, you work for your degree alone especially masters and even PhD. When we were given that orientation, we were told that actually, the PhDs are the orphans. And then for masters, we are now being trained to become orphans that you do a lot of work on your own. It is sad, but that is how I felt” R4, 27/05/2022*

From the above quotations, the participants felt isolated during the time they needed their supervisors. Others expressed despair and some disappeared completely as in the quotations below:

*“I think majority of us, when we disappear, we seem to have given up. You just go and work on other things because it is so stressful.” R10, 27/05/2022*

*“At times I felt like am bothering them, because they were most times busy to attend to me.” R7,27/05/2022*

*For the whole class we were more than 20 students, but up to now, I've heard that only two who graduated last year and around three now about to defend their theses. The others have disappeared.” R2, 27/05/2022*

From the findings above, it is evident that the participants had challenges in accessing their supervisors and yet they needed their guidance and mentorship during the research process which is a crucial stage in their studies that students must treat with total commitment as noted by van de Schoot, et al., (2013) however, this commitment must also come from the supervisors.

These findings echo those of other researchers who noted that commitment and availability of supervisors was of paramount importance toward the timely completion of postgraduate studies (Amani et al., 2022; Burmeister, 2015; Ndayambaje, 2018;).

#### **4.3.2.2.2 Slow Feedback from Supervisors**

Slow feedback from supervisors refers to the delay in the supervisors relaying their feedback to students concerning their work. This could be attributed to busy schedules and competing obligations such as teaching, examination, and marking of students' scripts because other than supervision, they also have their primary role of teaching especially at the undergraduate level which also involves invigilation of students during their industrial attachments and teaching practice. Due to these other competing roles and functions supervisors take longer to give feedback to students on their work (Akpaprep et al., 2014).

Participants expressed their experiences with regards to slow feedback from supervisors in the quotes below;

*“For me, my challenge was not from both supervisors, it was one of them who would take even up to three months without giving me a feedback on work I shared with him” R5, 27/05/2022*

Another said;

*“Due to that kind of slow feedback or response from my supervisors it took me more than one year to be ready with my proposal and you see now that was a big delay in my progress.” R8, 27/05/2022*

As noted, sometimes it is the student who takes so long to act on the feedback from the supervisor and this will contribute to the delay of response from supervisor the next time.

This is evidently expressed by the study participants below;

*“Sometimes the blame is not on supervisors because sometimes the student takes so long on corrections raised by the supervisor, and that is a delay too on the students’ part which in turn the supervisor may take long to look at your corrections and revert” R9, 27/05/2022*

Another participant added;

*“My supervisor once told me, if you do your proposal corrections or any form of corrections for three weeks, I will also take three weeks to read or even more.” R8, 27/05/2022.*

The study findings reveal that the masters students' supervisors' feedback was very crucial for a student's progress in their studies as students looked up to their supervisors to provide the much-needed guidance in the research process. Therefore, as a mentor, the supervisor is expected to be in constant back-and-forth communication with his or her student. This acts as an encouragement for the student to keep progressing in the research process and avoid working in isolation hence the delays in completion (Pitchforth et al., 2012; Amani et al., 2022).

#### 4.3.2.2.3 Lack of Consensus among Supervisors

Lack of consensus among supervisors refers to the inability of supervisors of one student to guide the student in one agreed-upon direction, each will give different feedback to the student on the same issue. Supervisors should first agree on how to guide the student instead of each of them giving their different opinion on the same issue. This calls for supervisors to have their own point of agreement hence the student has a clear response that points the research in one direction that both supervisors have agreed upon. To ensure consensus the school should ensure to match students with supervisors according to their specialties in areas of research. Usually the student is allocated two supervisors however, in some instances where there is need for an additional expertise a third supervisor is allocated to the student (Moi University Graduate Rules and Regulations, March 2018). Once the appointment has been acknowledged by all the parties involved it is expected that the student and his or her supervisors begin the interaction and that is the beginning of the research supervision process for a postgraduate student.

Participants in this study expressed their views with regard to their experiences when there was a lack of consensus among their supervisors;

*“So, this was my case, I finished writing up concept on what to research on during the proposal development stage, then I sent to both supervisors. Each read the work but gave me different feedback on the same issues and this went on many times until I didn’t know how to proceed.” R3, 27/05/2022*

*“I had that challenge too and at times I decided to deal with them differently and seek for guidance on different aspects from each of them” R6, 27/05/2022*

Another participant said;

*“So you send them the same piece of work then you receive different opinions. Now you ask yourself what can I do? Because one is telling you to do this way the other one says no you are doing it the wrong way” R10, 27/05/2022*

Then another said;

*“When I joined, I had so much zeal and vigour. But my challenge began when I noticed my supervisors were not even working in coordination – we never at one point all met to discuss my work. I tried doing on my own but when I received divergent views severally I felt so frustrated” R7, 27/05/2022*

However, this was a challenge that could easily be dealt with if the students took the initiative to resolve them as evident in the quotes below;

*“But, I decided to approach both my supervisors and requested for a meeting for all of us. I was lucky they agreed and we met. That really helped me so much because after that I now had a clear direction that all of us we had discussed and agreed” R7, 27/05/2022*

Another added;

*“I had to change my supervisors because I could not actually work with them. And even the two of them could not work together to supervise my work and it became a very big problem. In fact, that is one of the reasons why I delayed. I think that was in 2018 now. After I was given new supervisors, I loved the way they worked together. They would call me together. You see when they're working together, it even saves you some transportation costs so that you don't have to travel separately to see them. They actually helped me. They were able to push me. So after that, I didn't have any delay because I believe it is about the supervisor from my experience. They determine how long your work will take though at some part if you are given supervisors who keep you on your toes, you actually get to graduate very fast. Not unless, the problem now becomes on the part of the student. Before I was given the new supervisors, those were the challenges I really had.” R3, 27/05/2022*

From the above quotations, it is evident that a lack of consensus among a student's supervisors will contribute to the student delay in completing their studies. The supervision relationship between the supervisors and the supervisee should be an engagement or negotiation of the research process between the three of them. As the supervisors guide the student they need to both agree on what direction the student should take hence the

negotiation and re-negotiation must come to an agreement among them as noted by (Rugut, 2018). In the same vein Igumbor, et al., (2020) noted that supervision is a two-way scholarly interaction between the supervisor and the student, and throughout the engagement professionalism, collaboration and commitment must be maintained. As evident in the recounted experiences above the divergent feedback and guidance from supervisors did contribute to the delay in the completion of the masters students. Linde (2012) noted that right from the onset of the research process the student and supervisors should work as scholarly partners and each one of them should strive to maintain a good partnership by playing their respective roles effectively. This partnership applies between the supervisors of the student in order to achieve consensus but when one partner is not meeting their obligation, in this case, one of the supervisors or both the partnership gets frustrating and progress is hindered hence delayed completion.

#### **4.3.3 Supervisors' Perceptions on Factors Influencing Delayed Completion of Postgraduate Studies**

The third objective of this study was to investigate supervisors' perceptions of factors influencing the delayed completion of postgraduate studies. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather data from the participants. The research question that provided answers to this objective was: *what are the perceptions of supervisors on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies by masters' students?*

From the data gathered during the interviews, the following themes emerged; heavy workload, student-related challenges, and institutional-related factors.



### 4.3.3.1 Theme Four: Heavy Workload

Heavy workload refers to the amount of work and responsibilities supervisors have to handle as part of their job responsibilities as supervisors at the university. From the interviews, participants disclosed that they were not only supervisors at the university but they had other responsibilities outlined in the following categories: teaching and examination responsibilities, supervision responsibilities and administrative responsibilities.

#### 4.3.3.1.1 Teaching and Examination Responsibility

Teaching responsibilities refer to the workload involved in being a lecturer at the university. The supervisors expressed that their primary responsibility as lecturers at the university was to teach. They also expressed that they did teaching of both undergraduate and postgraduate students and at the postgraduate level they teach both masters and PhD students.

In this regard, the participants expressed the following:

*“Then, there's too much workload for lecturers that they're teaching, they're marking, I'm a Dean, I'm still teaching undergraduates and postgraduates. We lack sufficient number of faculty, postgraduate faculty to supervise and teach. So, that it takes long. If you give your work to your supervisor and that is the moment that they're marking exams and they are also required to meet deadlines, then the only thing that I can sacrifice is your work, I will put it aside.” KI 04 16/05/2022.*

*“Yeah, there is that as I said earlier. The lack of human resource capacity within the university where you have like CUE rules that you can only supervise three PhDs and five masters which is already big, huge number. So, you can already see the competing functions again other than teaching, marking, doing your own research, and also living your own life fully as a human being. So, you have all these competing roles and functions for a particular individual who finds him or herself in a department that is understaffed.” KI 02 16/05/2022*

*“I think too much workload, teaching. Like I look at myself sometimes, you may wonder with all my many PhD students and many masters, my coordination of the*

*school, my teaching of undergraduates, my teaching of postgraduates, I am supposed to do research, and community service and I'm at the board that needs monthly meetings. So, when you think about balancing that, it's quite heavy” KI 05 17/05/2022*

*“You are overburdened but you still have to teach. You have to examine especially the undergraduate courses. You have to examine them, you have to teach them and etc.” KI 03 30/05/2022*

Once the supervisor teaches a course he or she has to also administer examinations and mark the exams. The other examination responsibility was to examine the postgraduate students' thesis both at the university they teach in and external examination for other universities. The following quotes highlight what the participants said;

*“Some of the internal examiners also have a lot of work. They have a lot of pieces they would wish to mark which they have not marked and given reports on. So, all these challenges are there and given the fact that for one to be an examiner they must be at a particular cadre with regard to the type of thesis they're going to examine. Then it becomes a problem. You'll find that in a department, possibly you have only three senior lecturers.” KI 03 30/05/2022*

*“Also reading and going through a thesis is doing a very serious work. You must go through a thesis if you are an examiner. Look at the thesis and write a detailed report. So, you must understand the thesis and then after that, you just write a detailed report. So, if you have got quite a number of students, the way we are busy, you may delay not necessarily on your side but because of time. Maybe you have got five theses at a time” KI 06 25/05/2022*

Teaching and examining students is also a way in which students get to progress in their studies so it is as important as supervision. The supervisors who are also the lecturers have to find a balance in all these responsibilities to ensure they perform their responsibility to the best of their ability. The findings confirm the shortages in teaching staff within the school which has led to the strain in carrying out responsibilities by the few existing ones. This requires support from the university administration in the form of employing

more staff to handle the amount of work in the schools as noted by Mukhwana, et, al., (2018) that Kenyan universities are struggling because there is more student enrolment and fewer lecturer employment hence heavy workload on the existing ones.

According to CUE Standards and Guidelines for University Programmes (2011) maximum lecturer workload should be forty (40) hours per week this includes teaching; preparation of examination papers; marking of examination scripts; tutorials; preparation of teaching; supervision of academic work; administrative work; laboratory and laboratory preparation; and research/research assignments. When the workload exceeds this it means as a supervisor one will be straining to perform one of the core mandates; supervision. The reason behind taking on more workload than the maximum is due to the increased number of enrolled students at both levels which does not march the teaching number of teaching staff at the universities as posited by (Mukhwana et al., 2018).

#### **4.3.3.1.2 Supervision Responsibility**

Supervision responsibility refers to the workload that entails the supervision of postgraduate students. From the data gathered, supervisors expressed that they had so many students to supervise at the same time. The supervisors are usually assigned students every academic year: not more than five masters students and not more than three PhD students according to the CUE regulations (Commission for University Education, 2013). However, because of the high number of postgraduate students, some are even forced to take more students against the regulations and this causes delays in giving students feedback and the maximum guidance and support because of the competing responsibilities as is evident in the quotes below:

*“It also becomes too much and can be overwhelming. So, if there was a way of controlling the number of students whom we supervise also so that they don't become too many because these people are also aware that we also have a lot of commitment, family issues and all that. So, reading through those theses may really take long.” KI 06 25/05/2022*

*“Yes, it is quite a lot because some people are supervising masters and others PhDs. And you know, these are all different concepts. So, you must really read and try to understand what the student is trying to do. That is the generation of knowledge. You know, when you are writing a thesis you're generating knowledge. Tomorrow you'll also be quoted by other researchers. So, it is not a joke but something that is detailed and you must make sure that the students get to read, produce what is in their mind and you see their originality.” KI 07 05/06/2022*

*“There is also this problem of maybe having quite a number of students. Many students for one at a particular time. Also reading and going through a thesis is doing very serious work. You must go through a thesis if you are an examiner. Look at the thesis and write a detailed report. So, you must understand the thesis and then after that, you just write a detailed report. So, if you have got quite a number of students, the way we are busy, you may delay not necessarily on your side but because of time. Maybe you have got five theses at a time. And you have your students to supervise and help them come up with an examinable thesis, it's really a lot of work.” KI 06 25/05/2022*

*“Sometimes the supervisors are also very busy. You remember the programs, the teaching, you know, we are teaching undergraduates day and night. We are just so busy and the semesters have been back-to-back. Apart from that, our students are on industrial attachment and we also supervise them. We also have students who are on teaching practice. We also have academic trips. They go for industrial visits and we are just seven in the department. So, sometimes we become too busy but we have really tried to ensure that we really prioritize these postgraduate students.” KI 07 05/06/2022*

From the quotations above, it suggested that when one supervisor has so many students to supervise at ago it brings about delays because the supervisor has many students to attend to and this means feedback to the student takes long because the supervisor is busy on other responsibilities.

Supervision is a crucial part of a postgraduate student's academic journey, especially at the research level (Noel et. al., 2021) explainedthat. The student needs the mentorship and guidance of the supervisor at every step of the research work. Many times when this kind

of support is not offered to students they end up disappearing hence not completing their studies on time. This creates a feeling of discontent among students when the supervisor fails to offer the much-needed guidance during the research process (Rugut, 2018.)

#### **4.3.3.1.3 Administrative Responsibility**

Administrative responsibility involves administration activities of running the school or the university. Participants expressed that other than their normal teaching and supervision roles they also have administrative responsibilities. These responsibilities include attending meetings at the university, for instance, the university Senate meetings, departmental meetings and committee meetings such as the Deans' committee, the Board of School of Graduate among others. They also have to attend meetings and take part in school and departmental activities. For instance in the selected university there are several committees like the School Graduate Studies committee, Departmental Graduate Studies Committee, and Time tabling Committee among others. A supervisor as an academic staff in the School and the university then has a lot to attend to both at the School level and the university at large other than their primary role of teaching and supervision. All these responsibilities take time to attend to because one has to appear for them and sometimes chair and even prepare for them. This ends up competing with the supervision role of supervisors because of the many obligations they are expected to carry out and this was evident in the following sentiments by participants:

*“Then, there's too much workload for lecturers that they're teaching, they're marking, I'm a Dean, yet I'm still teaching undergraduates and postgraduates, I'm supervising, and I'm attending meetings as the Dean. So, there's so many competing functions for lecturers” KI 04 16/05/2022*

*“Like I look at myself sometimes, you may wonder with all my many PhD students and many masters, my coordination of the school, my teaching of undergraduates,*

*my teaching of postgraduates, I am supposed to do research, community service and I'm at the board that needs monthly meetings. So, when you think about balancing that, it's quite heavy. Interestingly, the university, when they think of workload, they think of the teaching workload and not these other administrative issues. So, they're looking at you as a lecturer, they just think about the teaching. They don't care how many meetings you attend and I mean, it's quite a lot. So, I think those things delay, you have students giving you their theses and you tell them to wait because you are marking but I still have my 1000 undergraduate students to mark. So, it's just a lot of factors.” KI 01 30/06/2022*

According to the quotations of participants, it is clear that they have been given many responsibilities by the university management yet they receive no support in terms of staffing the school to increase the number of faculty. So they felt like they just have to deal with their own workload challenges the best way they know how.

Supervision has been cited by many scholars as a cause of delay in the completion of postgraduate studies (Abiddin & Ismail, 2011; Cekiso et al., 2019; Kaur & Kaur 2013; Rugut, 2018). However, it is not the only cause and hence masters students should treat their research process with total commitment to ensure no delays in their progress. According to Noel et al., (2021), it is upon the student to ensure they complete their studies within the stipulated time of the programme. From the study findings, it is evident too that not only the students are busy with their personal commitments but the supervisors too hence the need for the supervisors to also find the best way possible to attend to one of their primary roles at the university of supervision of postgraduate students and in this case the masters students who are still at the induction stages of conducting research.

#### **4.3.3.2 Theme 4: Student-Related Factors**

Student-related factors refer to the challenges that pertain to the masters student. From the gathered data, the participants expressed that most of the delays experienced were on the part of the students themselves. That postgraduate students are often the cause of their

delay in completing their studies. This theme was expressed in the following two categories: students' personal challenges and student research journey challenges.

#### **4.3.3.2.1 Students' Personal Obligation Challenges**

These are challenges that the student undergoes in their personal life in the course of their studies. These are the limitations that individual student may face during their studies and has an impact on their studies by causing delays in completion. Masters students enroll for their studies alongside other commitments in their lives which include having a family, employment, family, and even community service. For instance, some students have families where small children are involved. This means one has to carry on with their studies alongside these other obligations which may cause one to delay completing their studies because they compete for the attention of this one individual who has to be a student, parent, employee, and at times deal with ill health and financial constraints. The participants expressed that students faced many challenges including; financial constraints, employment commitments and family and caring responsibilities.

Financial constraints on students were evident in the following quotations;

*“Then, now when you come to fee payment, some will work hard and finish but then they will not have paid their fees and therefore their theses will not will not be sent out for examination until they pay. So they will have finished, but they will not have completed, I mean, they'll have done their work, but then they're not, they've not completed. So maybe after two years is when they have collected money and they have paid.” KI 04 16/05/2022*

Most of the students enrolled are self-sponsored students and sometimes they may not raise their school fees on time hence delay to complete their studies. For instance one may not raise the school fees at the point of sitting for an end of semester examination or when one is about to do a proposal or thesis defense. This means one has to halt their studies until the time when the required school fees are paid for them to be allowed to undertake the

examination or the defense at an allocated time. And because of other financial obligations the student has like taking their children through school it may take a while before they get back to paying their school fees.

Other participants opined that:

*“So the next cause of this delay, of course, the obvious one, because they are PSSP students that is they are privately sponsored, it's money. They don't have fees. The university says, before you present your proposal, clear your fees. How about those who don't have the money to pay the fees?” KI 02 16/05/2022*

*“Yeah. The other could be financial but I think we have a policy, by the time you want to defend your proposal, you need to have finished the first year's total amount. So, if you have not finished then, you are like, "why am I working so hard and I don't have the fees to complete so that I can defend?" So, that could be a factor and many other personal things”KI 08 28/07/2022*

From the findings, most of the students enrolled solely depend on themselves to pay their own school fees as scholarships are not easily available as expressed by one participant:

*“So, the other thing is that they're no scholarships now. If they're no scholarships again it becomes difficult to push people because as I've already said that they're struggling to survive first and foremost. So yes, the simple as it is, completion of postgraduate studies is slow.”KI 04 16/05/2022*

The participants' words, some students will face completion delays due to financial constraints as they struggle to pay their school fees and at the same time meet other obligations simply expressing they are struggling to survive. This implies that the student will have to differ their studies for some time until they can afford the fees required and this may take long to get back to studies hence the delay.

Other than the financial aspects there is also the family and caregiving responsibilities that students have to deal especially to children who are young. Sometimes because of the tight structured way of the coursework, one may feel committed to their studies and their other



responsibilities neglected so when an opportunity arises to get back to it they simply do that and their studies may not be a priority at that point as expressed below:

*“Then apart from that, there could be personal issues. Most of them, I would say over 90%, they are people with families and jobs. So, once you finish the structured bit, the coursework, you think of just going back and taking care of the things that you had neglected, your family, your husband and children. It's time to go back to them. So, that again makes the student lose the momentum.” KI 05 17/05/2022*

*“Of course also students, when they come for masters, they have other responsibilities. Some are employed, some are married and some have other responsibilities. So, we are dealing with adults and when you deal with adults there are so many other factors, family factors, social factors that could be pulling them behind.” KI 01 30/06/2022*

Participants opined that some students would experience delays due to their own laziness and they disappear after coursework as in the quotes below:

*“Students also disappear. Many times they give their chapters and then they disappear. I have a student that I've been supervising. I think I don't know since when, 2014, 15? And she disappeared and the other day she sent me a full thesis you know, so there we are.” KI 04 16/05/2022*

*“As a supervisor, I give you the comments. You give me a thesis for me to read. I take one week to read that thesis. I give you with comprehensive comments, the thesis. “Where Do you meet?” You tell me, “Okay, I'm coming on Monday to pick the comments.” Okay, you'll find me in the office. Come Monday the fellow doesn't appear. He will come after one month to pick the comments. That is a delay already. When you pick those comments, normally I give comments and give you a timeline to effect. I will tell you, “I'm giving you two weeks to work on these corrections.” Then we meet after two weeks. You pick the comments one month later, you don't take that two weeks, but you take two months.” KI 02 16/05/2022*

From the expressed sentiments by the participants, it is evident that some students face delay because of their failure to fully commit to their studies. As mentioned above, taking long to respond to supervisor's comments and failing to show up for scheduled meetings

with supervisors makes the process of supervision long as a lot of time is wasted in between.

Students have a role to play when it comes to their studies and they cannot be the ones being followed up by the supervisors. As noted by Amani et al., (2022), supervisors expect students to also do their part and be more committed to their studies in order for them to experience maximum support from supervisors, and when this is not achieved then it acts as a demotivation to the supervisors. When this commitment from students is not forthcoming then it gradually reduces the motivation of supervisors to support the students (Bogelund, 2015; Halse, 2011). Supervision involves two individuals or two parties that is the supervisee and the supervisor(s) with agreeing or disagreeing interests (Abiddin & Ismail, 2011) as cited in Noel et al., 2021.

#### **4.3.3.2.2 Students' Research Journey Challenges**

Students' research journey challenges refer to the limitations the student encounters during their research journey. This represents the students experiences they went through in the course of their research work. Once coursework is completed the next face of a masters student's candidature is research work and through this time many students face difficulties that make it hard for them to proceed with completion of their studies. The participants alluded that the students did coursework very well but ended up disappearing as in the quotes below:

*“Yes, coursework is usually smooth because it is taught and often students have to attend classes and. The problem begins after the coursework, with the proposal and then the thesis writing. Those are the two major areas.” KI 04 16/05/2022*

*“Well, like I mentioned, it is true that coursework is never delayed. Like in our department, the coursework takes one academic year that is two semesters. And*

*then the subsequent two semesters, the students are expected to proceed with researches and in fact, from the mid of semester two in year one, they are allocated supervisors with whom they are expected to work closely to develop their topic, research areas, research interests.” KI 03 30/05/2022*

The quotes above allude to that coursework is usually not an area where students experience delays because they have to attend classes and sit for exams physically at the university.

Delays are experienced when students begin their research journey, right from the onset of coming up with the title of their research proposal. Participants expressed the challenges that existed in a student’s research journey as follows;

*“A number of students take a lot of time to identify the topic. Right? So, those are my experiences that delayed the identification of the topic by the student. Right? That is where we begin. Right? Some students are blank. They have no topic at all in their minds. They just come here and tell you, "Teacher, give me a topic." What can I do? What can I do? For that one, it becomes tricky because the work should be, the ownership of this work should be the student and not the supervisor, right? And that again, dealing with such a student is a bit tricky because you may encourage the student to come up with a range of topics so that we can pick the one that is in the heart of the student. Right? But again, this student doesn't have. That is the first cause of the delay, identification of the topic.” KI 02 16/05/2022*

From the quotation of the participant, it is evident that some students are uncertain of what exactly they want to research on and therefore cannot even come up with the topic of the proposal. Other participants expressed this as follows;

*“I think one of them is conceptualization of what they want to do. I've seen students who come and they say, they will say randomly, "I want to do something. Let's say like CBC," but you see, what about CBC? So you tell them, "go and do it, get a problem and then come and let's discuss it." But now putting exactly what they want into a statement of a problem, then into a topic, it takes quite a long time. The conceptualization of exactly what they want.” KI 05 17/05/2022*

*“We have been encouraging them, but what I believe the major issue is coming up with a concept. They take too long but we keep on encouraging them on what is happening. Sometimes they come up with a concept.” KI 06 25/05/2022*

When the student is uncertain of what to do they end up over-consulting and changing topics many times as evident in the quotes below:

*“One, we have very many types of students. Student one, you work with a student from the onset, identification of the topic. You help student to work with a student to identify the topic, right? You're working together. You agree. Then the student, after some time and after extensive reading will now begin to develop some cold feed on the topic. Would now come back and say, "Look, I think I have a better one." Right? You see that is delay already. So, we are going back to square one, identification of the topic, right? Then you work on the second one because you want a topic that the student is more comfortable. You can't push a student to take a particular topic because we want the work to be owned by the student. So, you take the second topic. After some time, the student comes back again running and saying, "Now I think I found a better one again," right? You know, now we are going to the third, the fourth, the fifth topic and you know, before you identify a topic, there is a lot of reading that has gone into it. You go to the library, you spend all your time, you look at a given area and you develop some interest. Later on you lose that interest, you shift to another one. That really, a number of students take a lot of time to identify the topic. Right? So, those are my experiences that delayed identification of the topic by the student.”KI 02 16/05/2022*

*“So when you begin talking to very many people before you talk to yourself that will definitely create a delay. Right? It'll cause a delay, right? Begin by talking to yourself first, "what is it that I want?" Because you must have passion in that topic. If you don't have that passion, then again, that is a problem.” KI 07 05/06/2022*

This challenge manifests in the inability of the student to write academic documents as evident in the quotes below:

*“Some people can't even write, that's the truth. So, you have to help them to write and that takes long and our systems do not have structures that support such students.”KI04 16/05/22*

*“I had one, for instance, a master's, we discuss things and she gets it but then when it comes to writing she tells me, "I don't know what to write." I said, "But we had a meeting, we discussed this." Then I realized it's the confidence that whatever you are writing is correct.” KI 05 17/05/2022*

*“So, I think also the writing skills can be an issue and how to put things. I say, "Just put it in the way you have talked." But then as you do that, now, when we are revising, now we can put it in a more, like if it is in psychology in a more psychological terminology. But first of all, write the way you understand then now we say, "You see this term, it is talking about self-esteem. Then instead of all these,*

*let's now replace it with self-esteem." So, academic writing can be a challenge. Even for PhD, it could be a challenge." KI 05 17/05/2022*

From the quotations above are evident that academic writing can be a big challenge and the student can take a long time in trying to come up with the research work. However, it is evident also how the supervisor is crucial at this point to offer guidance and mentorship to the student so that there can be progress and clarity of thought for the student but sometimes the student does not commit to their research work fully and resort to 'ghost writers'. This means the masters student may get someone else to do the writing up of the proposal or thesis as expressed in the quotes below:

*"Then, there is the ethical questions of nowadays, students going out to get people to write for them. So, when they come for defense, chances are that they may not answer questions. That means that they will be given most probably three months or sometimes nine months. And that also contributes to the delayed completion now, because you go back to the field for another nine months and which might not be nine months. It might be more now because you know, have to start a fresh, you have to do these things and all that. Then the thesis has to be re-examined afresh and that will take another nine months plus another six months, those are 15 months" KI 09 26/07/2022*

*"So, some of them come not really fully prepared for this journey because the default part is not the coursework but to read, learn, take notes and then do the research and pass. So, sometimes now you ask them, "Can you now, maybe start writing." And then, you know, with these cyber, we have so many cyber around university and town, which of course when you give them something small, they can do something for you. So, in the process, if one gets something like that and then takes to their supervisors, they are very rigid and we tell them, "No, this thing is supposed to be like this." It becomes very difficult for them because it's not their work." KI 01 30/06/2022*

This makes the student very rigid in terms of making corrections to the document because it is not their own original work. It becomes complex for the student to adjust as per the supervisor's guidance since he or she is stuck to one line of thought; the one written for him or her or one is facing the challenge of having to pay the 'ghost writers' to amend the work as recommended by the supervisor. The other challenge also is when the students

have a negative attitude towards research. That is most students feel that research is such a tedious and stressful thing to do and so they approach it with pre-existing assumptions such that at the first obstacle they already want to give up as in the quote below:

*“If I can think about the students themselves sometimes there is that notion that students think research is very difficult. So, when they are doing a proposal, they think it's so difficult, even finishing a proposal and presenting it, they think it's quite a big thing. Maybe it's time we demystified it, about research.” KI 0517/05/16*

Participants alluded to several challenges that students face when they begin their research journey that usually cause them to take longer than the stipulated duration of the programme. Right from the onset of this journey, some students find it difficult to identify an area of research where they want to focus on, sometimes one has an idea of what they want to do but cannot conceptualize it and put it down in writing. During this moment of confusion and uncertainty, they end up over-consulting and end in more confusion and lack of direction from the many suggestions given by the people consulted. Others resort to ‘ghost writers’ that is they decide to pay someone to do the work for them which is unethical as far as research is concerned as the student does not own the work and sometimes becomes so rigid when the supervisors suggest corrections to the document. The student is obligated to uphold certain guiding rules and regulations and commit to their work diligently as noted by other researchers (Armstrong et al., 2004; Ismail et al., 2015; Knox et al., 2006). Further, Njihia & Kiende, (2018) noted that many students took long to conceptualize and execute their research projects which delayed completion for the different cohorts.

During coursework students are taught research methods however, with the many delays and difficulties students face during their research journeys, it shows that it needs to be more practical as opposed to theoretical so that students can acquire the relevant skills and

competencies critical to this phase of their studies (Mukhwana et al., 2016; Njihia & Kiende 2018). Several studies noted that the supervisor acts as a guide to the student during the research process Rugut, 2018; Chris & Timothy, 2001 and the guidance offered becomes motivating when the supervisee is willing and aware that he or she needs the guidance in order to make progress in the research journey. Good progress in research ensures timely completion and despite all the challenges the student is primarily the driving force in this journey which should be maintained steady throughout the research process.

#### **4.3.3.3 Theme 5- Institutional Factors**

Institutional factors refer to the factors that touch on the university management that lead to delays in the completion of postgraduate studies. Participants expressed their views on institutional factors presented in the following categories; motivation of supervisors and examiners and system of tracking postgraduate students' progress.

##### **4.3.3.3.1 Motivation of Supervisors and Examiners**

For supervisors and thesis examiners to carry on with their work well, they need the support of the university in terms of being paid for the work they do with the postgraduate students. Each supervisor should be paid an honorarium amount once he or she is done with the student. However, the participants in this study expressed that, nowadays it is not the case yet they are given many students to supervise, who end up graduating without the supervisors being paid. In recent years Kenyan universities have experienced increased enrollment of students (Mukhwana, Oure, Too, & Some, 2016). This means a strain on the resources available among them university finances and most institutions have not been able to recruit more staff to cope with the high enrollments and the increased teaching loads (Mohamedbhai, 2014).

Participants had the following to say;

*“Then there are questions of motivation that when you supervisor a post graduate student, you're supposed to be paid because they pay for it but the university hardly pays now. So, there's no motivation again. Why should you work so hard? And then there's nothing, you finish the student graduates, they go, you've not been paid for four of them.” KI 04 16/05/2022*

*“Then the payment of examiners and even the supervisors. Where the payment, if the university delays in paying them, they will also delay in writing those reports. We are human beings. If they delay in paying them, they delay in writing those reports.” KI 02 16/05/2022*

*“This is one of my major challenges, telling lecturers or examiners, "I want your reports on time," but you haven't paid them for the last over five years and I'm giving them in May and telling them in June, I need it. Then they'll ask me, "From 2015, where are my dues?" So, it's so complex.” KI 0517/05/2022*

*“Yes, and the motivation level is down. I struggle with a lot of external examiners. I think in almost all the departments. You have to call them back, "Please, can you return?" then they reply, "But you haven't paid me. Why am I returning and you haven't paid me?" So again, you have to tell them that you are dealing with those too. The issue of payment is completely out of my hands. So, it is now the university to think about how to, and it's across the board. It's not only school of education. Everyone is talking about the same thing.” KI08 28/07/2022*

*“Sometimes I would say, in the current situation we are in, the lecturers may not be motivated because the University has delayed the payment. So, there's nothing that drives them to supervise because now when I supervise, I'm supposed to be paid at the end but now that payment is not forthcoming” KI 01 30/06/2022*

These findings indicate that supervisors and examiners need to be paid for the work they have done otherwise it becomes demotivating to take more students to supervise and more thesis to mark yet the university does not fulfil its mandate. This means that sometimes when lecturers are appointed to supervise they may decline because they know their work will not be rewarded. This goes with thesis examiners and especially the external examiners who are usually given so many theses to examine. They end up taking so long to give their reports on the theses and this delays the students because without full reports on their theses, they cannot be scheduled for defenses. The university should therefore honour their



part by being prompt on the payment since students pay the amount in their school fees. This is well stated in the university rules and guidelines for graduate studies that, supervisors shall be paid as prescribed in the fee structure an honorarium in two installments after successful proposal defence and theses and examiners shall be paid upon submission of satisfactory theses reports (Moi University Graduate Studies Rules and Regulations, March, 2018)

#### **4.3.3.3.2 System of Tracking Postgraduate Students' Progress**

The system of tracking students refers to the mechanism of monitoring students' progress throughout their studies to ensure that they progress according to their program structure. Masters students' program is supposed to take two years and the student is ready to graduate. But most of them take more than two years. There are consequences to this delay but sometimes it is not easy to tell how many students have overstayed in the university system because there is no one central way of tracking postgraduate students at the university. Participants in this study expressed their views on the lack of a system to track students as follows:

*"Then as supervisors also, we tend to have no tools of tracking our students after coursework. Somebody goes away and unless they get back to you, you have no means of tracking them." KI 03 30/05/2022*

*"I will be very open and sincere and say that, unless the students get back to you that is the only means of tracking because we don't have a system. There is no system in place, much as there is a lot of paperwork that we are supposed to sign, normally it's every year to help us give information about particular students and how they're faring." KI 03 30/05/2022*

Another opined that tracking has to begin with supervisor-supervisee interactions;

*"The tracking process should be very clear. And this is an agreement between the student and the supervisor. They have to agree how to track the work done." KI 01 30/06/2022*

That the university should support the School of Graduate Studies to have the tracking software running:

*“Yes, we try to do that in collaboration with the schools but it's not very easy. We came up with a student software that was supposed to help us, called the graduate student management system. So, this graduate student management system is supposed to be a software that would show us and indicate where the student is in terms of work and their supervisors. So that if the student has submitted a chapter, then it shows that the student submitted the chapter on this day and the supervisor received it on this day and the supervisor returned it with comments on this day. The student is supposed to go through, make corrections and return it on this day. But it has not been implemented by the University.” KI 04 16/05/2022*

From the views of participants, it shows that a tracking system is very crucial for the progress of masters students to be ascertained at all times and avoid delays. This is in line with a study by Ramogi, (2018) who found that 90% of the respondents in her study agreed that there was a need for a tracking system for students’ progress, adherence to timelines, and a contractual agreement with clear rational between the supervisor and supervisee.

#### **4.3.4 What are the Strategies to Curb the Delay in the Completion of Masters Studies**

The fourth objective of this study was to recommend strategies to curb the delay in the completion of postgraduate studies at the selected university. Data was gathered through the focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participants expressed their opinions on what they thought would be the best strategies to deal with the challenge of delayed completion. The research question that provided answers to this objective was: *what are the strategies to curb delayed completion of postgraduate studies?*

From the data gathered during the interviews and focus group discussion, the following themes emerged; student-related strategies, school/ department strategies, and university /institutional-related strategies.

#### **4.3.4.1 Theme Eight: Student-Related Strategies**

Student-related strategies refer to the ways in which the masters students themselves can implement to ensure they complete their studies on time and avoid delays. From the data gathered using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions the participants expressed that students had a role to play in ensuring the timely completion of their own studies. Participants' opinions were expressed in the following three categories: programme planning, Attending research workshops, and timely communication of challenges.

##### **4.3.4.1.1 Programme Planning**

Programme planning refers to the kind of preparation and arrangements students make at the beginning of the masters programme to ensure timely completion. This planning pertains to time for studies and even the funds to pay for school fees. It is upon the student to ensure that they have the time to study and conduct research work once enrolled. Postgraduate studies are most times self-sponsored hence, the student should ensure there is funds available to pay school fees. This may involve taking study leave for those employed to ensure ample time for studies and taking loans or applying for scholarships to ensure the financial aspect of one's studies is taken care of. These were expressed in the following quotes

*"Then, now when you come to fee payment, some will work hard and finish but then they will not have paid their fees and therefore their theses will not will not be sent out for examination until they pay. So they will have finished, but they will not have completed, I mean, they'll have done their work, but then they're not, they've not completed. So maybe after two years is when they have collected money and they have paid." KI 04 16/05/2022*

Family responsibilities take time and hence one may not be able to progress in their studies at the expected pace but the student should be able to plan or balance their studies and their responsibilities as in the quotes below

*“Then apart from that, there could be personal issues. Most of them, I would say over 90%, are people with families and jobs. So, once you finish the structured bit, the coursework, you think of just going back and taking care of the things that you had neglected, your family, your husband and children. It's time to go back to them. So, that again makes the student lose the momentum. Of course job again, demanding that you're required to at job and in the evening there's a family. So, that work and school balance is quite a big thing” KI 05 17/05/2022*

The university could also be part of this kind of planning by supporting students in one way for instance in terms of fees payment and getting grants as opined by some participants;

*“Let's not forget the fact that we are a third world country, a third world economy. Most of our students are struggling financially. They're struggling domestically. They have their own challenges. So, we let those who want to continue, just be allowed to continue but offer them support mechanisms. If it is financial, if we could be having some things that they can do and then they win some grants for example, that goes into their fees.” KI 06 16/05/2022*

Another participant during the focus group discussion alluded to taking study leave a good way for planning for the completion of their studies on time as in the quote below;

*“And in most cases when you take study leave again the employer will expect you to finish on time because if you are taking a course of two years, after two years you are automatically supposed to go back to the station. So again, you have to work very hard to make sure that by the time the two years elapse, you go back to work.” R3, 27/05/2022*

Another said the following during the interview session;

*“So, the other thing is that they're no scholarships now. If they're no scholarships again it becomes difficult to push people because as I've already said that they're struggling to survive first and foremost. So yes, the simple as it is, completion of*

*postgraduate studies is slow. Okay, that's another one also we cannot overlook.”*  
*KI 08 28/07/2022*

From the above quotations, it is clear that a student must do proper planning for their studies so as to ensure timely completion. It is evident that many aspects of one's studies must be put into consideration because delay is not caused by one factor (Clark, 2010). This planning does not only entails how school fees will be catered for but other personal commitments like employment and family responsibilities hence the student should register for the program with all these in mind.

#### **4.3.4.1.2 Attending Research Workshops and Seminars**

Research workshops are seminars organized to teach the attendees about research methods and how to conduct research. Many students conveyed their challenges during the beginning of their research work which is at the proposal stage hence it would be important for them to attend such workshops and seminars so as to gain more knowledge and skills on research methods. This has been made easier with the virtual platforms which one can attend from wherever they are. These opinions were expressed by participants in the following quotes:

*“Yes. And one thing that we had tried before COVID, I think 2019, we did very well. We had workshops, research workshops. Then the workshops were to bring together students and you see that way I think it was during the holidays when they were coming. I think the first week, when they come, there is one day set for workshops. Even if you're not doing your coursework, you would come and listen and see the new things, the research methodologies and all that. That used to be a motivation because you come, you interact with your friends, they tell you they're almost finishing, and you go back and rethink your life”* KI 02 16/05/2022

*“Of course we have had a number of workshops. We have organized a lot of workshops to deal with proposal writing, writing of the thesis, we have had a number of internal and external facilitators coming to talk to our students and prepare them on how to walk this journey”* KII07 05/06/2022

*“Yes, I remember one time I attended some workshop online and for sure I benefited, because I created some kind of network or friends who I now get in touch with concerning my research work” R4, 27/05/2022*

*“You mean research workshop? ...yes I think they would really help because they shade light on the way to conduct research and even write your thesis” R6, 27/05/2022*

The findings above revealed that research workshops would help them understand more how to go about their research projects and that it would be good if they were done virtually to enable them to attend from wherever they are which is in line with Ramogi (2020) who noted that students expected that in the course of their research methods training they would acquire more knowledge on how to conduct research and practical skills of writing and analysis of data. This portrays the need for effective training for all the students, failure to which the research journey can be a very challenging one as noted by Mouton (2011); Rademeyer (1994) that the difficulties and inadequacies in thesis writing are a result of students' inexperience, inadequate supervision and inadequate practical training of students.

#### **4.3.4.1.3 Timely Communication of Challenges**

This refers to students conveying the challenges they experience during their studies on time to the relevant authority so as to be helped. The student needs to seek assistance from the school or department on time instead of taking too long and hence the delays. As expressed by participants sometimes students face various challenges but take too long to communicate with the relevant authority at the university and yet they would have been assisted and proceeded with their studies. These were expressed by participants during focus group discussions as follows:

*“I started my graduate studies way back in 2010. With all vigour and zeal, I had thought I would graduate within the next two years in 2012 but things didn't work so well with me. At first I had challenges with my supervisors and I think one of the main challenges is that they were not working in coordination. They were not working together. Like I would give your work to one of them but they didn't work together, I could just deal with them differently. So, you give your feedback to one of them, he will get back to you in some ways. When now you give the same piece of work to the second supervisor, he guides you in a different way. You now remain confused. What do I do about this? It went on for long but then I just decided to try seek for help. One time, I travelled all the way and came to see Dean, who referred me to the Head of department and I was given new supervisors, in 2018, you see I really struggled for so long. “R3, 27/05/2022*

Another one added;

*“I would not mention a name but I didn't like the way my supervisor treated me. Many times I would call to inform him that my work was ready, he'll not pick calls and later he would not call back. Actually, I don't know the right term to use but he would be so mad to me that why did I have to call him. "I am your superior, I should be the one to call you, not you calling me." And when you now don't call him, he will end up not calling you. And when you call him, he become so harsh until I had to report the same to the Dean. After I was given new supervisors, I loved the way they worked together. They would call me together. You see, when they're working together, it even saves you some transportation costs so that you don't have to travel separately to see them. They have actually helped me.” R1, 27/05/2022*

One key informant suggested that students should not delay to communicate their challenges as follows;

*“So for me I would always ask the students, whenever you have a challenge, you have a recourse, you have even a classrep. So, a classrep can get the information, quietly discuss with the chair of the department and the chair of department can solve the problem at that level and if it's difficult, he can go to the Dean. And once it reaches the Dean, we have rules and regulations. I would say, for example if the person has not read your work say, for a whole month and there's no feedback for a whole month. Then definitely the problem is the supervisor because action can be taken. But what I'm trying to imply here is that there are processes where one can discuss in a very good way, especially now, the way you have put it, I can't be very sure but sometimes the ladies would say maybe there is some sexual harassment, maybe this person has conditions for them to do what I'm supposed to do. Therefore they have some fear, but there is a way of getting that information to the classrep, the Dean himself or the chairman of the department and say you have a problem here and there because you can't suffer forever.” KI 0130/06/2022*

It is evident that students enrolled with so much zeal and hope to carry on with their studies smoothly but along their research journey they faced challenges that were not anticipated. Despite the obstacles progress is crucial hence the student has the responsibility to communicate their challenges on time otherwise if they are quiet then the issue may never be resolved. It is evident also that the relevant authorities were willing to help the students. Confirming the need for collaboration among all the stakeholders involved and especially in a supervisor-student-oriented collaboration (Noel et al., 2021).

#### **4.3.4.2 Theme Nine: School/ Departmental Strategies**

School and Departmental strategies refer to how both the School and Department must put in place measures and efforts to ensure that there is no delays experienced by students. It entails the school and the department working together to ensure that the student's progress is as smooth and progressive as possible. From the data gathered the participants expressed their opinions and were categorized as follows; effective supervision and tracking of students, regular meetings with students and regular workshops for students and supervisors, and pairing of students.

##### **4.3.4.2.1 Effective Supervision and Tracking of Students**

Supervision and tracking of students refer to the act of guiding the student throughout their research work and tracking is the monitoring and follow-up done on the student's progress. These two aspects are very crucial in ensuring that the student completes their studies on the stipulated time. The department and the school should ensure that students are well-guided by their supervisors during their research work. This can be done by both the school and the department by ensuring that the supervisors regularly give progress reports on their students as expressed by participants in the following quotations;



*“If we could have support mechanisms, where among other things we demand that possibly as supervisors, you get written progress reports and commitments from the supervisees, possibly twice a year to see how they progressing” KI 0330/05/2022*

Tracking of students is also very helpful in ensuring that students’ progress as expected in their studies. This can be done at the departmental and school level by the relevant persons given the mandate to handle postgraduate matters at both levels. Participants expressed that it was important for the school to be aware of the stages of each student with regards to their studies so as to ensure none is left behind. There is need for constant communication between the students and the department on ones’ progress report as expressed in the following quotes;

*“I could give an example here of the department of education foundations. The department of education foundations, the postgraduate coordinator decided to call a meeting of all those who had snitched, brought them to around table to discuss those issues.”KI 01 30/06/2022*

The key informant further added;

*“What I've told you now, with the use of online, the virtual meetings, at least they have progressed very well, I can assure you that it could be now around 80% successful. Those who had completely like given up came back, got new supervisors and they started their work and they're moving on very well. So, what I would say is sometimes it depends on the strategies put by the chair of department and postgraduate coordinator in the department.” KI 01 30/06/2022*

Another participant added that the already developed system by the school of graduate studies should be adopted by the university and the school allowed to carry out its mandate in terms of tracking postgraduate students at the university;

*“Yes, we try to do that in collaboration with the schools but it's not very easy. We came up with a student software that was supposed to help us, called graduate student management system. So, this graduate student management system is supposed to be a software that would show us and indicate where the student is in terms of work and their supervisors. But it has not been implemented. It's not there, because it's not been taken up by the university management”KI 0416/05/2022*

From the verbatim above, participants were in agreement that the school and the departments had a role to play in monitoring the students' progress so as to ensure their studies run smoothly and completed within the stipulated time. It is also clear that when some of the measures are implemented they yield good results. For instance what the department mentioned by one department did was to ascertain the progress of their students and invited them for a discussion on how to keep progressing in their studies. This encouraged even those who had given up to revisit their studies and this way they will continue to complete their studies

Further participants expressed the need for an electronic way of tracking students progress. However the school had not been supported to roll out the system in the schools hence could not express if it has been of help or not though the participant was sure it would be of help since it had worked in other institutions. Monitoring of students' progress is a complex task and there is need for an advanced way of doing it preferably a system (Ismail et al., 2014). With the rise in enrollments it means that tracking of students need to be done electronically by all the stakeholders involved. This ensures also effective supervision since through the constant follow up of students' progress by their supervisors, students receive maximum support which is one of the major factors of timely completion ( Lessing & Lessing 2004; Noel et al., 2021; Rugut, 2018).

#### **4.3.4.2.2 Regular Meetings and Workshops for Both Students and the Supervisors**

The department and the school should together organize meetings and workshops for the supervisors and postgraduate students. These meetings ensure that there is communication between the parties and the department hence it is easy to know postgraduate students' progress and make proper follow-up on them. It is during such meetings that supervisors

can express their opinions and challenges with supervising particular students and vice versa with students. So that in case there is any challenge it can be promptly dealt with. To the supervisors as well the workshops act as a way of refining their supervision skills to ensure productive supervisor- supervisee relationship and engagement. Participants expressed these strategies in the following quotes:

*“We have already done a lot of work in trying to support the supervisors in terms of, we have something called capacity building for supervisors and lectures (CABLS). Actually it is still ongoing and it is sponsored by DAAD through CERMESA. So, we do capacity building of our lectures and supervisors. Then the other thing that we have also done is ask them also to apply for online supervision courses. For example, like one called CREST I don't have the long meaning of the word. So, that one again is done in Stellenbosch university in South Africa. It is virtual and I also did that course. So they train on how to supervise the students. We also had earlier times workshops. We have workshops for our supervisors and we have facilitators discussing on how we can make the process smooth and faster.” KI 0130/06/2022*

The research workshops will be of great help to postgraduate students since they get to learn ways of carrying out their research and seek guidance if need be.

*“Of course we have had a number of workshops. We have organized a lot of workshops to deal with proposal writing, writing of the thesis, we have had a number of internal and external facilitators coming to talk to our students and prepare them on how to walk this journey. And I think that has also assisted a number of them.” KI 01 30/06/2022*

*“And one thing that we had tried before COVID, I think 2019, we did very well. We had workshops, research workshops. Then the workshops were to bring together students and you see that way I think it was during the holidays when they were coming. I think the first week, when they come, there is one day set for workshops. Even if you're not doing your coursework, you would come and listen and see the new things, the research methodologies and all that. That used to be a motivation because you come, you interact with your friends, they tell you they're almost finishing, and you go back and rethink your life.” KI 07 05/06/2022*

*“Then 2021, I think we were now getting used to the zoom things. Towards the end of 2020, we started online workshops led by the department of foundations for the students just to come together. We had students presenting and faculty also presenting on different aspects of research. A student would just say, “I want to present my work. What is the findings and all that?” Then we meet with the faculty*

*talking about certain aspect of research. Somehow it attracted a lot of students, law students came and we would have over 200 students online. That made the students come back a little bit because they would come and hear issues related to them.”*  
 KI 03 30/05/2022

From the expressions of participants it is clear that both supervisors and masters students need the workshops. This helps to support the supervisors to know how to go about supervision process in a more efficient way because it equips them. The school and the departments had begun to encourage their supervisors to even apply for the online supervision courses this ensures that each faculty member is equipped to perform this task from the point of knowledge and expertise acquired. Especially with those new in supervision of postgraduate students it is of great help as through the workshops they get to interact with other supervisors and learn from their experiences. Supervision is a critical ingredient for the completion of studies by postgraduate student at any given level as alluded by many scholars Abiddin & Ismail, 2011 ;Mbogo & Wambua, 2020; Noel et al., 2021; Olubusoye & Olusoji, 2014 among others. For the supervisors these workshops act as a way of retooling and professional development and acts as a sensitization tool for the students (Atibuni et al., 2017 as cited in Noel et al., 2023). Similarly Ekpoh (2016) posited that they improve students' progress in thesis writing and academic writing.

#### **4.3.4.2.3 Pairing of Masters Students**

The pairing of masters students refers to grouping students so that they can assist each other with their studies, especially with the research work. This can be done by one supervisor who has both masters and PhD students or masters only or even two or more supervisors. This kind of grouping acts as a source of motivation for students to help each other in discussing their work and seeking guidance from their supervisor. This works well with

the new error of online platforms like Zoom that bring people together from different parts of the world at whatever time they agree on. So the supervisors guide the students collectively and they can benefit from fellow students as well. This strategy has worked for most students and the participants recommended it in the following quotes;

*“And when we pair them and they work as a team, there's a lot of internal encouragement and motivation. So that they assist each other as colleagues. And then we have also allowed our students to consult supervisors that do not supervise them. So long as they know this person has done something related to their area, they are free to consult and get more information from that and that has helped a number of them” KI 01 30/06/2022*

*“So, I just decided to put all my students in a group. Actually, we didn't have this online zoom things. So, we decided we'd be meeting every, that time we had said every two or three months, physically. We would meet on campus wherever they're and of course they live all over the country, they would come. For a whole day everyone would present their work and we correct each other. So, we did that a couple of times, that time they were both 4 PhD students. Even those who were lost, they came back because they had to present. I used to tell them that i will write a report about you. So they all come, but we all made a day when everybody's available. So, coming to 2020 after the pandemic then it became better. Now they said we can do zoom. We still maintained till now. Some graduated, but they're still in the group. They never leave. We do every two months when it's practical, not two months, two weeks at nine because all of them are working. To me that has helped, like half the group has graduated. Another two are set to graduate this year, which is a nice thing because I told them it's their meeting and not my meeting and that made it better because I don't have to be there. I have missed two or so meetings ever since but they're the ones who set their agenda. They're the ones who are the MScs, and they set the time, if you are late, you have a fine to pay and they do very random. Sometimes they don't do things to do with their theses per say but something else, they think it's important for their professional development. Like they want to think about, let's say now the CBC is on, they say, "Why don't we just think about the CBC and just have a motion to contribute about this thing?" Because I told them apart from your thesis, you also need to be an academician which doesn't mean that it's all about your topic.” KI 05 17/05/2022*

From the above verbatim, the participant expressed how pairing the students that were under her supervision worked well in improving the students progress in research work. This acted as a motivation for this students to complete their work. This means that

Supervisors should motivate their students during the research process (Tahr et al., 2012). From interacting with fellow students they also motivate each other as they learn from each other as evident from this findings where students could conduct the Zoom meetings even with the absence of their supervisor. With this pairing of students it is evident that a supervisor must embrace the online supervision so as to bring together the students. This argument is justified by the recent COVID-19 pandemic which made it impossible for face to face meetings. Online meetings are now the new normal and have been found to aid quick progress of postgraduate students (Noel et al., 2023).

#### **4.3.4.3 Theme Ten: Institutional-Related Strategies**

Institutional strategies refer to the strategies that must be undertaken by the university management in order to curb delay in completion of postgraduate studies. From the data gathered the participants' views were put into four categories; motivation of supervisors and examiners, ensure strict adherence to policy, facilitation of school of graduate studies, and change of admission criteria.

##### **4.3.4.3.1 Motivation of Supervisors and Examiners**

The motivation of supervisors and Examiners refers to the ways in which the management can inspire and encourage the supervisors and examiners to continue to offer their services to the students. Some participants cited non-payment of their allowances once they are done with supervision. The following quotes express their opinions:

*“Then there are questions of motivation that when you supervise a postgraduate student, you're supposed to be paid because they pay for it but the university hardly pays now. So, there's no motivation again. Why should you work so hard? And then there's nothing, you finish the student graduates, they go, you've not been paid for four of them. Such things are also there” KI 04 16/05/2022*

*“Then the payment of examiners and even the supervisors. Where the payment, if the university delays in paying them, they will also delay in writing those reports. We are human beings. If they delay in paying them, they delay in writing those reports.” KI 02 16/05/2022*

*“For instance something like examination of thesis should take a month if it exists for one and a half months, telling lecturers or examiners, “I want your reports on time,” but you haven't paid them for the last over five years and I'm giving them in May and telling them in June, I need it. Then they'll ask me, “From 2015, where are my dues?” So, it's so complex.” KI 05 17/05/2022*

They also expressed that they have so many students to supervise and examine which gives the impression that the staff are few hence they have to take on a lot of work as expressed in the following quotes;

*“So, they have to determine and even some of the internal examiners also have a lot of work. They have a lot of pieces they would wish to mark which they have not marked and given reports on. So, all these challenges are there, and given the fact that for one to be an examiner they must be at a particular cadre with regard to the type of thesis they're going to examine. Then it becomes a problem. You'll find that in a department, possibly you have only three senior lecturers.” KI 06 25/05/2022*

Examination of the theses is also a challenge especially with the external examiners because their payment is not done on time hence they sometimes take long to mark or refuse to take more theses to mark because the motivation to work is not forthcoming as expressed in the following quotes;

*“...you realize that you may not have known but then we have a given a finite number of external examiners who work for the department. If they have a lot of work, we shall have to actually operate at their pace” KI 01 30/06/2022*

*“Yes, and the motivation level is down. I struggle with a lot of external examiners. I think in almost all the departments. You have to call them back, “Please, can you return?” then they reply, “But you haven't paid me. Why am I returning and you haven't paid me?” So again, you have to tell them that you are dealing with those too. Yet, it is completely out of my hand. So, it is now the university to think about how to, and it's across the board. It's not only school of education. Everyone is talking about the same thing.” KI 02 16/05/2022*

One key informant narrated how they have so much to do and that creating a balance can be very difficult. Hence the need for more staff employment to be done to ease the workload on the current faculty members;

*“Concerning the faculty I think too much workload, teaching. Like I look at myself sometimes, you may wonder with all my many PhD students and many masters, my coordination of the school, my teaching of undergraduates, my teaching of postgraduates, I am supposed to do research, community service and I'm at the board that needs monthly meetings. So, when you think about balancing that, it's quite heavy. Interestingly, the university, when they think of workload, they think of the teaching workload and not these other administrative issues. So, they're looking at you as a lecture, they just think about the teaching. They don't care how many meetings you attend and I mean, it's quite a lot. So, I think those things delay, you have students giving you their theses and you tell them to wait because you are marking but I still have my 1000 undergraduate students to mark. So, it's just a lot of factors.” KI 05 17/05/2022*

The University management, therefore, has to find ways of paying the supervisors and examiners because they do an excellent job of ensuring students' progress is not delayed. This will act as a motivating factor for the supervisors to be able to carry out their responsibilities more effectively because they expect that the honorarium promised to them will indeed be granted at the completion of the assigned task of supervision and examination of postgraduate students. This expectation is in line with findings of Noel et al., (2023) who found out that supervisors expected the institutions to support them in both monetary and non-monetary ways. As indicated by participants, the university should also employ more staff so that supervisors and examiners do not take too many students and yet they cannot supervise all of them at ago. This will ease their workload and the masters' students can benefit more because they need more guidance as they begin their research journey.



#### 4.3.4.3.2 Ensure Strict Adherence to Policy

This refers to the university management encouraging every relevant body to adhere to the postgraduate policy document. The formulated policy needs to be followed to the letter by all departments this will ensure that postgraduate studies run smoothly and students complete on time because the policy already provides guidance and rules on what needs to be done when and by whom. Participants expressed that there was no strict adherence. To enhance this some participants opined as follows;

*“So, maybe what I would say is we are not very strict when it comes to following the rules and regulation as per the letter of admission. But if we go in that direction, maybe we need more of the workshops to discuss with our chairs of departments, the postgraduate coordinators and also the students themselves. So that they're aware of what is available and the costs that you can take when something delays.”*  
KI01 30/06/2022

That adherence to policy must first be seen to be effective from the management level of the university. This sets the pace for other relevant departments to follow. One participant cited that the policy states clearly when and how payment of supervisors and examiners is to be done but the management does not adhere to it, hence the laxity trickle's down to other departments below it and causes the whole system to experience challenges;

*“Then the payment of examiners and the supervisors. When the university delays in paying them, they will also delay in writing those reports and supervision process. We are human beings.”* KI0926/07/2022

Participants alluded to the institution management not adhering to the laid down rules of postgraduate studies. Some suggested that for the success of policy adherence, commitment needs to be detected right from the top management ybodies of the institution and will be followed by the stakeholders at lower level of postgraduate studies implementation. There is need for unity of pupose and support. Rong'uno (2016) pointed out that the institution

management is key in ensuring that postgraduate studies are conducted in an organized manner which is supported by these findings that the laid down policy on postgraduate studies should be followed right from the top leaders of the institution to the students themselves so as to achieve timely completion.

#### **4.3.4.3.3 Facilitation of School of Graduate Studies**

Facilitation of the school of graduate studies refers to the support that the university management offers to the school of graduate studies so that it is able to carry out its mandate effectively. Participants expressed that the school of graduate studies was not able to carry out its mandate efficiently because of a lack of enough support from the university management. The following quotes express their opinions;

*“If we could have like a resource center strategically placed somewhere, where students can go and access materials, they can interact with the research assistants for guidance. So be it, those are some of the support mechanisms that we are thinking about which the university should be able to invest in.” KI04 16/05/2022*

*“It should even have a resource, when we talk about a resource centre should have a resource centre complete with research assistants who should actually always be on hand to work with respective students. But that is the ideal situation but the university has not supported of facilitated the school to be able to put up this facility.” KI04 16/05/2022*

From the above findings the school of graduate studies seems to have been given the mandate to coordinate postgraduate studies in the institution. However, it is not able to carry out their full mandate without the support of the institution management hence many plans remain unexecuted. This coordination requires both monetary and non-monetary support which was not available as alluded through the above verbatims. The school of graduate studies runs its coordination through the various coordinators appointed from every school this proves that the work of coordinating postgraduate studies is crucial. These

coordinators are directly in touch with students and supervisors at the school and departmental level hence any challenges for instance in supervision can be quickly identified and solved ( Hammon & Tennant, 2010; Noel et al., 2023; Zhao,2010). Consequently since the school of graduate studies acts as the coordinating body of postgraduate studies in the study institution so should it be given the maximum support to carry out their mandate.

#### **4.3.4.3.4 Change of Admission Criteria**

Change of admission criteria refers to changing the eligibility criteria of admission of a masters student. It means enhancing it to ensure that only the most qualified candidates are admitted, who through their documents and assessment by the admitting school they show commitment to completing on time. The following quotations express the need to bring about the change;

*“At times we admit students and when they get into these programs, we find that they don't have the capacity. Really, they don't have, right? You talk to them, you stay with them, you discuss with them for three hours. When you ask them now, "what have we said?" Empty. Three good hours but this student has gotten nothing”. KI02 16/05/2022*

*“But I would say probably to sort this problem, though this will not be the right way of dealing with it, is to have serious structures put in place and meeting the students. So that, I know I'm admitting a student whose motivated, a student who is ready for this program, a student who wants to finish. Sometimes there are those who just want to be heard that they're just doing a master yet they're not serious to complete. So, that's why I'm saying sometimes if the opportunity is given where they're interviewed before admission, that you interview the students before admission. Even before admission, they have a concept, what they want to come and research on. I think this happens most of the time before you are admitted, there is some motivational letter, there is a concept one is to research on and so on. So, in one way or another it helps.”KI03 30/05/2022*

Some key informants said that sometimes students misuse the opportunity of readmission by seeking readmission many times as an excuse to continue staying in the system yet they

make very little effort to complete their studies. This tends to spoil the image of the university as it is seen as a failure for the university to have students registered for more than six years yet they are masters' students. The following quotations shows the suggestions made by the key informants on how to deal with this challenge;

*“If the policy can be rewritten now to read that you can only seek readmission twice. The first one you'll be given three years, the second one, you're given three years. That is six years, right? So, you can delay, you are registered today, and you stay for five years, you come back, ask for readmission. You are given three years. That makes eight years. After the three years, you go back again for five years and come back and ask for another three years. If in 12 years' time, you've not graduated, the policy should simply read, you will not be readmitted. Readmission should simply be limited to two times.” KI03 30/05/2022*

*“The university has clear policy on what to do with this student who has delayed over a given period of time. The university has a clear policy. Unfortunately, it has been very difficult to implement that policy. Personally, I have a student who is /09, right? In other words, the student was admitted in 2009 for a masters program not PhD. Up to now, the student has defended the proposal, is still in the field from 2011 because the student defended in 2011, from 2011 to date is still in the field. Would always have a reason of not coming. So, when you deregister, normally the policy says after the given period of time you stand deregistered. So the student comes, asks for readmission and is given, right? After the readmission, the fellow goes back, disappears again. So, you know, it's difficult what happens? The policy does not say you can readmit this number of times. That's where the loophole is in the policy.” KI02 16/05/2022.*

According to the findings, the admission criteria needed to be revised so as to ensure that only students with the right qualifications and intellect are enrolled. At masters level is when students are introduced to research activities and this demands that one is able to carry on through the research process with the support of supervisors and not rely on 'ghost writers'. However, some participants alluded that at times there are students who find it difficult to carry on with their research activities especially academic writing. Which points to the criteria in which the student was enrolled because if one had been subjected to some form of interview or writing a concept paper before enrollment then it would have been

easy to identify those weak academically. With the current rise in enrollments it is important to be very careful with the kind of students who are enrolled. An admission criteria is critical as it helps predict student achievement in a programme as posited by other researchers (Grace et al., 2001; Kirchner & Holm 1997; Paullette, 2023).

#### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented findings from the data gathered using FGD conducted among the masters students and interviews by Deans and supervisors from the selected public university in Kenya. The data analysis was done using thematic analysis, then presentation and interpretation was presented in the chapter as per the objectives and research questions. The next chapter presents the summary, recommendations, conclusions and theoretical contribution of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore masters' students and supervisors' experiences on delayed completion of postgraduate studies in a selected public university in Kenya. It is positioned in the field of Education Management and Policy studies focusing on postgraduate studies. The study was anchored in the phenomenological research design which is based on a qualitative approach. The research participants of the study were ten masters' students and nine supervisors. Data was gathered using focus group discussion and in-depth interviews and thematic analysis was used to analyze the gathered data while Brofenbrenner's (1979) Ecological theory anchored the study.

In this chapter, I summarize the findings of the study, draw conclusions from the themes that emerged and propose recommendations based on the study findings and give suggestions for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

This section provides a summary of all themes generated through thematic analysis of the gathered data. The themes answered four research questions; *what are the motives of enrolling for postgraduate programmes by masters students in a selected public university in Kenya? what are the masters' students' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies in the selected public university in Kenya?, what are the supervisors' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate*

*studies in the selected public university in Kenya? And what strategies curb the delay in completion of postgraduate studies in the selected public university in Kenya*

### **5.2.1 What are the Motives of Enrolling for Postgraduate Programmes by Masters Students in a Selected Public University in Kenya?**

This was the first research question of the study whose aim was to explore the motives of the masters students that made them enroll in the masters programmes. One theme emerged from the thematic analysis of the gathered data.

The study findings revealed that masters students' enrollment motives were for professional and personal growth. The students hoped that upon completion of their studies, the degree certificate earned would give them promotions and salary increments. Clearly, the participants' primary role was to be in a higher position at their employment stations and enjoy a bigger salary. In addition, the masters students are expected to gain more skills and knowledge in the area of specialization hence seeking career development. Another motive behind enrollment was to gain prestige from the titles that advancement in one's studies brings about. Notably, some had the intention of going up the ladder of academia that is to become 'doctors' and 'professors' so as to fully enjoy the prestige that came with postgraduate studies and the titles.

The researcher then concluded based on the findings that the motivation to enroll in a masters programme in the selected university was for professional and personal growth as the students were keen on advancing their careers and their lives in general because of the promotion and salary increment that comes with the degree earned. It can be concluded too that these motives were strong and that is why they were willing to brave their studies regardless of their employment, family and financial obligations.

### **5.2.2 What are the Masters' Students' Experiences on Factors Influencing Delayed Completion of Postgraduate Studies in the Selected Public University in Kenya?**

Two themes emerged from the analysis to answer the second research question on masters' students' experiences on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies in the selected public university. It is evident there are many factors that contribute to delay in a masters students' completion of their studies. Some delays are within the student's own jurisdiction and others are beyond the student. Masters' students expressed that employment responsibilities were a key influence as they were not able to balance between employment and their studies, yet they could not do away with their employment to pursue their studies, and neither could they entirely drop out of their studies and focus only on their studies. For them, employment was a source of their livelihood including their school fees for their studies, and pursuing a masters programme would earn them a promotion at work. They also faced supervision challenges that caused them to take longer than the expected time in their masters' programmes. Many of them admitted that supervision would determine whether one progresses or not because they were very much dependent on their supervisors' guidance and mentorship, especially at masters level where they were still learning how to conduct research.

### **5.2.3 What are the Supervisors' Experiences of Factors Influencing Delayed Completion of Postgraduate Studies in the Selected Public University in Kenya?**

For the second research question on the perceptions of supervisors on factors influencing delayed completion of postgraduate studies, three themes emerged from the analyzed data. The participants gave their perceptions with regard to the delay in completion of postgraduate studies by masters students. It is evident that supervisors too had a role to



play in the delay of students' completion of their studies. The heavy workload was cited by the participants. They expressed that they had so much to handle in their departments and the university. They had many students to supervise because each academic year they are allocated new students with no regards to the recommended number by CUE. This tends to put a strain on them because they also have other responsibilities like teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate students. They also had to administer exams of the taught courses and mark them at a certain time period hence they constantly have to work hard to keep up with the deadlines because the students are on campus throughout the year unlike before when the government had allowed universities to have long holidays where they would use this time to do their marking and other responsibilities hence have extra time to supervise the masters students. They also had administrative responsibilities to attend to like attending meetings of various management sections of the university.

Participants also mentioned that there were various factors related to the students themselves. It is evident that the masters' students have to regard their studies with total commitment regardless of the challenges they face because they are the ones who are to earn the degree. From their perceptions research was mostly the main cause for delay because many students complete their course work on time but once they begin the research process they then begin to drag. Mostly students would disappear and take long to act on the feedback of the supervisors. As cited, some were even unable to conceptualize what they want to research and end up taking so long to decide on their research topic. This becomes difficult for the supervisor to guide a student who is completely clueless on what to do because the supervisor cannot think for the students as it has to be the students' interest in the study area that guides and propels the study.

Participants did cite non-payment as one of the demotivating factors which the institution had to work on. They expressed that they do a lot of work and yet they do not get paid as in the policy and yet students pay school fees, so sometimes they do not see the need to continue accepting to supervise more students each year yet the university does not honour their part by paying them. This has also affected the external examiners of the student's theses because due to non-payment they decline to mark or they demand their pay before they could release the marked theses hence this brings a lot of delays since payment is not forthcoming.

#### **5.2.4 What Strategies Curb the Delay in Completion of Postgraduate Studies in the Selected Public University in Kenya?**

The fourth research question was on strategies to curb delayed completion of postgraduate studies from the data analyzed three themes emerged. Participants were asked if they could suggest strategies that could help curb the delay in the completion of postgraduate studies. From their suggestions, it is evident that there are strategies to curb factors that are student-related, school or departmental and institutional challenges. Masters' students should do proper planning for their studies so that once they enroll in the programme they can finish within the stipulated time of two years. One should plan for the time needed to do both coursework and conduct research, plan for funds to pay for their school fees as well as attend to their family responsibilities. The students should also keep themselves conversant with research methods by attending research workshops whenever they can. The students should make it their responsibility to communicate any challenges they face during the time they are enrolled as students so that they can be assisted in time and not spend so much time being stuck in an issue that would have been resolved.

The department and school should work together to ensure effective supervision of students and track their progress closely to avoid any delays. Students should be encouraged to work together by pairing them so that there is peer motivation. There should be regular meetings and workshops for both students and the masters' students. This way both students and supervisors get to interact and even learn. From this interaction, it is even possible to notice when one student disappears.

On top of these reforms should be the university management that should support the postgraduate studies in the university. The support they can offer is by ensuring to motivate the supervisors and examiners by making their payments on time. The school of graduate studies should be facilitated to be able to carry out its mandate for instance to equip the existing resource centers for postgraduate students. The university should ensure the policy on rules and regulations is adhered to that way the delays are not experienced as every party plays their role until the students complete their studies.

### **5.3 Theoretical Contribution**

This study was underpinned by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory (1979). The theory contends that human development and life experiences can better be studied, explored to make meaning of and interpreted through continuous interactions of his or her environmental components (Bertalanffy, 1972). Human beings go through many interrelated systems which form their experiences. These interactions are between the person and the members or sectors of their environment such as people, culture, and structures of governance or leadership within (Jack Leonard, 2011).

In this study, the masters student was seen as the one who has to go through and interact with the many systems of his or her environment as an enrolled student at the university. To understand the kind of experiences the masters student had as an enrolled student at the particular school within the university. This theory was key in guiding the researcher to have this understanding of the kind of experiences the student has and how they affect their timely completion or how they cause the delay in completion of studies. Hence the first research question was to first get to understand the motives behind the student enrolling for the programmes. The participants expressed their motives and the key one was the professional growth motive. For most of the masters student participants, this motive was key in ensuring they pushed through the challenges experienced along the way. The theory posited that there are relationships between the systems hence the masters students had interactions with fellow students, supervisors and university system in general.

The theory presents each layer of system as independent yet interrelated. This component was key in this research as the findings revealed that the masters student has to work closely with their supervisors and even the school in order for their studies to go smoothly and end at the expected time. This is where the researcher had the masters students and supervisors narrate their experiences during their interactions as supervisor-supervisee. This shade light on the need for collaboration as in the instances where this did not happen the student experienced delays in completing their studies.

The research findings further revealed that the masters student and the supervisors both could suggest ways of improving their interactions hence answering the research question of what strategies could be used to curb the delay in the completion of studies. These strategies touched every system within Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystem of interaction, in the

context of this study right from the university management all the way to the individual student who is the main subject of the postgraduate programme.

The study has contributed to knowledge that the masters student has to take up the highest responsibility of completing their studies within the stipulated time regardless of the experiences. This is because the university structure is such that all sections are interrelated and should work together. The study also emphasizes the need for maximum support from all sections because completion of postgraduate studies is an objective that cuts across all the university sections and departments that the student interacts with. This can be achieved by implementing the strategies that participants suggested among them, proper planning before enrollment for masters programmes, commitment by supervisors to the students' work and support by management to supervisors, examiners and the student. By so doing then the whole ecosystem which in this context is the university works in harmony, each one playing their role to ensure completion of postgraduate studies on time.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

The aim of this study was to explore masters' students and supervisors' experiences on completion of postgraduate studies in a selected university in Kenya. The analyzed data gathered from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion gave insights into what participants perceived of the factors that contributed to delayed completion of postgraduate studies and on the effective strategies to curb the delay.

From the study, the masters students' paramount motive to enroll for their studies was for professional development, many of whom had the hope that upon completion they can receive a salary increment and promotion at their work places. The second objective

revealed that the masters students perceptions on factors influencing delayed completion, it is evident that the delay is caused by several factors some are personal to students and others are outside their control. In this regard, it was concluded that the masters' students should take their studies seriously and strive towards completing within the stipulated time because at the end of the day completion on time is for their own benefit most of all.

Based on the third objective on supervisors' perceptions on factors influencing delayed completion, it was evident that supervisors too have a role to play and it was concluded that supervision is the most crucial part of a students' research process and there should be good relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. The two parties have to work in harmony in order for the research process to be smooth and fruitful in the end. That supervision determines whether one completes on time or not. Therefore, it can generally be concluded that timely completion of studies by a masters student can be driven by maintaining their motivation high enough to drive him or her to work hard regardless of the challenges. That supervision is at the helm of timely completion because of the influence it has on a student's progress in their research activities. Similarly, there are students' personal challenges that enhance delays in completion and those that are out of the control of the student. The institutional support is key in enhancing timely completion hence students and supervisors require this support so as to achieve timely completion.

With regards to the strategies to curb the delay in completion of postgraduate studies, it was concluded that all the stakeholders involved at the helm being the masters students had a role to play in order to curb the delays experienced in completion of their studies. And that the suggested strategies put in lace would curb delays in completion as long as there

is commitment from the masters students, supervisors and the institutional management. The study further concludes that delays in completion of masters studies can be eradicated.

### **5.5 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested by the researcher;

First, the study revealed that masters students enrolled for the programmes with the primary motive being professional and personal growth. They had so much zeal and hope to graduate on time to be able to achieve this goal. However, most of them were not able to maintain the same zeal to see them through to graduate on time. The researcher recommends that students should understand that they are the driving force behind the timely completion of their studies and hence not just let the driving force end before the goal is achieved. That obstacles along the way can be worked out in a collaborative manner with fellow students and the university's support. It is recommended too that the University should commit to supporting and encourage these students who have not been able to complete on time. Follow-ups and re-admissions should be offered to them and a strict mechanism is established so that they again do not exceed the time accorded to them after re-admission. The university should also ensure to adhere to the admission criteria of students into masters programmes that is they should be subjected to interviews and must have a concept note right from the onset so that the required guidance begins during the first year of the programme. This way the research project is given more time than the usual one year where concept note, proposal, data collection and report writing, and thesis defense all happen in just one year. The School of graduate studies has to be at the forefront

in enforcing this in collaboration with the schools and Departments without this it may not be possible to complete a masters programme within the stipulated time of two years.

Secondly, this study revealed that the masters student had a bigger role to play in ensuring timely completion of their studies. Yes, there were many challenges in the course of their studies some were out of the control of the student like supervision challenges. It is important for the masters student to find a way of dealing with the challenge rather than just allowing it to deter their progress. It is recommended that the student communicate their challenges to the relevant authority in the school for instance the Chair of Department who can give a way forward on the same because some supervision challenges may just need a change of supervisor and the student progresses well. The School should encourage their students to also speak up in case of any issues and not fear any form of victimization. For personal challenges, it is important for the student to remain resilient and focused throughout their studies. For instance, fee payment was a challenge for some students and I recommend that masters students should make proper arrangements for the same even before they are enrolled in masters programmes, this way stagnation in the course of their studies can be avoided.

It takes a total commitment to one's studies to complete on time. The student should be willing to be guided and seek help when need be. That the student should cooperate with his or her supervisors and follow the guidance given.

Thirdly, it is evident that supervision is a crucial part of a master's student research process. Therefore it should be put more emphasis on the school and the university. The supervisors should be committed to the students they have been appointed to supervise and the



university should keep their promise of ensuring they are paid on time for the work done. There should be regular meetings between the supervisors and the masters' students this way they get to interact through workshops and meetings to discuss the students' progress this way their relationship is strengthened. For the students who disappear or take long to respond to supervisor's feedback, it is important that they supervisor try all means to reach the student including escalating the matter to departmental meetings where each supervisor can give updates on their students and proper follow up is done. Supervisors should also embrace online supervision and pair their students. This will help in motivating them to encourage each other to complete on time and even learn from each other.

Finally, the university should prioritize postgraduate studies and put more emphasis on how they are carried out just like the undergraduate studies. Research and innovation is high at the postgraduate level hence the university management should invest resources to facilitate this agenda by building more resource centers for the postgraduate students and encouraging them to write grants so as to attract funding for their research projects and that of the university.

From the data it is evident that students, supervisors and the university at large cannot achieve the goal of timely completion alone, each of them has a crucial role to play. Therefore the blame game should stop and all work in harmony as there is only one goal for them all; timely completion of postgraduate studies. At a higher level the policy makers like CUE too have an influence on this challenge. They should work closely with institutions of higher learning to ensure support to the students. They can be of paramount help if more scholarships are availed for students and add their voice to the higher learning

institutions' request for more funds to run the postgraduate activities and employment of more faculty members to support the few existing ones.

### **5.6 Suggestions for Further Research**

This study suggests the following;

1. This study was carried out in only one school of the selected university, in order to get the actual situation it is recommended that a study be carried out in all the fifteen schools in the entire university.
2. It is also recommended that a similar study be carried out in a private university to ascertain if the same phenomenon is experienced in private universities as well.
3. Further, it is recommended that a similar study be carried out using a different approach that is quantitative or mixed methods since this was a qualitative study and may not have been a representation of the whole student population experiencing the same phenomenon.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MASTERS STUDENTS

Date: ..... Time: .....

I am Sheila Chepkirui, a postgraduate student at Moi University. I am conducting a study on **Completion of Postgraduate Studies: Experiences of masters students and Supervisors in a Selected Public University in Kenya.**

I would like to appreciate your acceptance to take part in this study. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Kindly respond to the questions freely and honestly.

1. Could you tell me more about yourself?
2. What was your aim or motive for enrolling in the programme?
3. When do you expect to complete the programme?
4. Could you tell me about your experiences as a masters student in Moi University?
5. What would you say has caused the delay in your studies? *Probe: individual, supervision, institutional)*
6. Do you know of a policy document on rules and regulations governing postgraduate studies in Moi University? If yes, how did you know about it?
7. What would you suggest that can help to curb the delay in completion of your studies?
8. Do you intend to get back to your studies?

Thank you so much for your responses, I kindly request that you allow me to come back and seek clarification if need be. Thank you.

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DEAN OF SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES, DEAN OF SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SUPERVISORS

INTERVIEWEE: ..... Date: ..... Time: .....

I am Sheila Chepkirui, a postgraduate student at Moi University. I am conducting a study on “**Completion of Postgraduate Studies: Experiences of masters students and Supervisors in a Selected Public University in Kenya.**”

I would like to appreciate your acceptance to take part in this study. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Kindly respond to the questions freely and honestly.

1. Could you tell me about yourself? *Probe: years of experience and service as a dean, area of specialization.*
2. The School of graduate studies was established in 2018, what role does it play in tracking students’ progress and helping students complete the master’s programme on time?
3. What would you say about delayed program completion?
4. Could you share with me the reasons for delayed masters’ students’ completion of their programmes in the university in details? *Probe: student related, supervision, institutional.*
5. What has been your experience as a supervisor for masters students in the School?
6. What does delayed completion by students mean to the institution? *Probe: policy on completion, students’ awareness.*
7. As a school/University what measures have you put in place to support masters’ students complete their programme on time?
8. Is there any ways in which the university tracks masters student progress? If yes, tell me about the process.

9. What happens to those students who have overstayed?
10. How can they be supported to complete their programmes?

## **APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS**

### **RESEARCH TOPIC: “Completion of Postgraduate Studies: Experiences of masters students and Supervisors in a Selected Public University in Kenya.”**

Dear participant,

You have been identified as a postgraduate student at Moi University, School of Education and I hereby request you to participate in this study. Kindly read the information below and ask questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of masters students with regards to delayed programme completion in the School of Education, Moi University and publish the findings as a masters thesis, journal article in a referred journal and present in a conference as a paper.

#### **Description of the Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be requested to participate in a focus group discussion which may be conducted virtually and will only take 30 to 60 minutes of your time. This will be done at an agreed time and date that is convenient to you and other participants that will agree to also take part in the study.

#### **Risks/ Benefits of Participation**

There are no expected risks or benefits associated with the participation in this study. Participation is voluntary.

#### **Confidentiality**

The information shared and your identity will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only. The recorded tapes will be treated with uttermost confidentiality too and permission to record will be sought beforehand.

#### **Right to Decline or Withdraw Participation from the Study**

The decision to take part in this study is entirely yours and is voluntary. You have the right to participate or to decline participation or to withdraw at any given time of the focus group discussion process.

#### **Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

You have the right to ask questions and be answered by me using the contacts provided before, during and after the research. Feel free to contact me at any time if you have any inquiries. In case you have any concerns that occur as a result of your participation in this study please report them to the School of Graduate Studies Moi University.

**Consent statement:** I have read the above information and I have received answers to the questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study and in addition I agree that the focus group discussion be recorded.

**NAME:**

**SIGN:**

**DATE:**

MOI UNIVERSITY,  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
P.O.BOX 30100 - 3900  
ELDORET.

3/03/2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOL**

I am Sheila Chepkirui, a Master of Education Research student of Moi University. I am requesting for permission to conduct research involving masters students and supervisors in the departments within the school. The research will be for master's thesis focusing on delayed completion of postgraduate studies with the title, "delayed Program Completion: a case of masters students in selected schools in Moi university. This project will be conducted under close supervision of Prof. Catherine Kiprop of Moi University and Dr. Lonati Sanga of University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

I hereby seek your consent to approach a number of masters students and supervisors, who will be the participants for this study.

Attached are copies of the consent to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of approval letter which I received from Moi University. In case of inquiries or any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on: [sheilachepkirui2015@gmail.com](mailto:sheilachepkirui2015@gmail.com) or 0718858297.

Yours sincerely,



Sheila Chepkirui.

**APPENDIX 5: PERMIT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM MOI UNIVERSITY**



**MOI UNIVERSITY**  
Office of the Dean School of Education

Tel. Eldoret (053) 43001-8/43620  
Fax No. (053) 43047  
REF: MS/R/5261/21

P.O. Box 3900  
Eldoret, Kenya

DATE: 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2022

**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
National Council for Science and Technology  
Box 30623-00100  
**NAIROBI**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: RESEARCH PERMIT IN RESPECT OF SHEILA CHEPKIRUI - MS/R/5261/21**

The above named is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year Master of Education Student at Moi University, School of Education, Department of Educational Management & Policy Studies.

It is required of her M.Ed studies to conduct a research project and produce a research report. Her research topic is entitled:

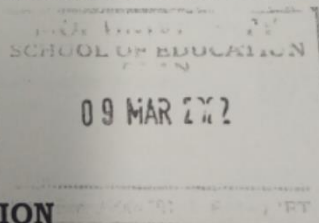
**“Delayed Program Completion: A Case of Masters Students in Selected Schools in Moi University.”**

Any assistance given to enable her conduct research successfully will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

*[Handwritten Signature]* 09/03/2022

**PROF. J. K. CHANG'ACH**  
**DEAN, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**



(ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution)



**APPENDIX 6: LICENCE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH BY NACOSTI**

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: 429745

Date of Issue: 19/May/2022

**RESEARCH LICENSE**

This is to Certify that Miss.. SHEILA CHEPKIRUI of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Uasin-Gishu on the topic: **DELAYED COMPLETION OF POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES: EXPERIENCES OF MASTERS STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, MOI UNIVERSITY, KENYA** for the period ending : 19/May/2023.

License No: NACOSTI/P/22/17465

429745

Applicant Identification Number

*Walter Mburu*  
Director General  
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Verification QR Code

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