

A Study of the Worries of Master Students (M.Ed.) Towards Researches in Private Sector Universities, KPK, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to assess the attitudes of 100 randomly selected postgraduate students of teacher education programs from private universities in Pakistan. Students often rate courses in research methods negatively and regard them as difficult. Data were collected from the sample respondents through a questionnaire. Results indicated that very few students having positive attitudes towards research. Research is said to be the significant factor for technological advancement, social development and institutional fame. For quality research positive attitude towards research is a prerequisite which itself is influenced by different factors including the cost of research, institutional research facilities and time. The presents study is an effort to determine whether or not the institutional fees have any effect upon the students' attitude towards research. The study sought to determine the university graduate students' attitudes towards the learning of the research methods course, since attitudes influence students' performance at a discipline. The research findings indicated that very few students had positive attitudes towards the learning of research methods and seemed more interested to study the discipline. The methods of instruction used seemed to influence the attitudes of the students. Researchers have to cope with the available resources as no help or guidance is provided to them. No researcher is born with fundamental research skills but they learn those skills from others usually from their supervisors or seniors who have gone through the same procedures while they conducted their own research study but what happens is that no one readily guides them. The study recommends that the instructional process should be managed in appropriate ways, for example which provoke critical thinking in students, so as to create positive attitudes towards the quantitative research course to teach them research writing and research publications.

Keywords: Attitudes, Research, Anxiety, Master Student, universities.

Introduction

In the fast moving world research has become important intellectual equipment for the human beings to change their life style according to the needs and necessities of the society. Research opens new frontiers in all the fields like medicine, agriculture, space, business, and also in Education. One of the important objectives of teacher education is to create awareness and understanding of importance of research in the classroom. Thus, Action research became a part of the syllabus where in, the students are expected to prepare action plans and implement the same during their practice teaching sessions. The main aim of the Master in Education course is to provide capabilities of serving community in general and developing research attitude and skills among the students in specific. These students in future have to promote interest towards research among the students when they take up their jobs as teacher educators.

Research is principally a way to counter the queries aroused by curiosity. Research is a system of investigation to augment knowledge and understanding. In some graduate and under graduate courses research methodology is a study subject; still students are unacquainted with the significance of research and the intentions of including it as a subject in curriculum. Most of the students like to do research work but majority of them tend to avoid it as research methodology has been found a complicated subject to grip over. To choose an entirely new topic and work on it within available resources and without proper supervision is not an easy task and in such a situation the research seems to be the most difficult subject which cannot be qualified easily. People usually found it difficult mainly on the basis of difficulties they encounter while conducting research.

Research is the systematic process of collecting and analyzing information to increase our understanding of the phenomenon under study. It is the function of the researcher to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon and to communicate that understanding to others. It provides rewarding learning experiences for students, and producing graduates capable of high personal and professional achievement. Educational research is often undertaken for the sake of Degree and not with a goal to make a significant discovery. It is also commented that research has become imitative, repetitive; only oriented towards western culture and philosophy; instrument oriented rather than goal oriented; statistics dependent in place of mastery of knowledge domain; and lastly is not out of interest,

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aptitude of the students. Other factors that affect the quality of research conducted by the students are facilities available, mentors, departmental activities, attitude of both staff and students towards research, confidence etc. Attitude towards research of the staff enhances enthusiasm and credibility among the students. One's attitude influences mentally how a person mentally approaches research including all the work and human interactions related to that research. A positive attitude enables a person to solve the problem quickly whereas, a negative attitude hampers the efforts in research both technical proficiency and in terms of interpersonal relationships that research entails. Introduction Research plays a significant role in our daily life. All inventions have been possible with the help of research. With the help of research human being were able to find the cure for flue, polio and many other horrible diseases. Not only in medicine, had it also helped a lot in technology. Talking to long distance relatives is the outcome of research in technology (Gross, 2001). Research is the process of collecting and analyzing information to increase our understanding of the phenomenon under study (Swindoll, 2012). Attitude is positive or negative affect towards a particular subject. Bi dimensional definition of attitude includes beliefs as well regarding subject. Comprehensive definition of attitude includes emotions, beliefs, behaviors and their interaction (Zan & Martino, 2007). The attitude towards research basically means a detailed study of thinking, feeling and the person's behavior towards research.

According to Papanastasiou (2005), it is important to identify the attitudes towards research so that a positive attitude can be developed among students and hence their learning can be facilitated in turn. They do not understand the concepts of research and its importance in their professional life. The reason according to Butt and Shams (2013) might be that experimentation during their previous pre-medical study might have developed a positive attitude towards the research among prospective teachers. Papanastasiou (2005) found negative attitude towards research among undergraduate students. Siemens, Punnen, Wong and Kanji (2010) found that involvement in research was significantly enhanced in the fourth year medical students compared to the second year medical students. (Zan & Martino, 2007) also found that the performance of postgraduate students towards the research was better compared to the undergraduate students. The reason may be that undergraduate students think research as a tough and difficult course and want to avoid this course. Conversely, it is possible that they assumed research in negative manner because they had to face several obstacles and could not understand the concepts of the research.

Literature Review

Siemens, Punnen, Wong, & Kanji (2010) conducted a study on the medical students to explore their attitudes towards the research and found that though the majority of the students felt that the research would be beneficial in their career, fewer than half of the students were significantly involved in any research activity during their medical school. Students who realize the need of spending more time on research activities are even fewer. About one fourth of the student reported no interest in any such activity. Sabzwari, Kauserand Khuwaja, (2009) conducted a study on junior faculty in the medical profession in Pakistan and found that though the majority of them perceive research a difficult endeavor but they have positive attitude towards the research.

Patak and Naim (2012) found that the attitude of students of English as Second Language and English as Foreign Language towards visiting library was very poor. They lack basic research skills ranging from searching and evaluating literature sources to paraphrasing and giving citations.

Butt and Shams (2013) observed negative attitude towards the research among prospective teachers. However, Butt and Shams (2013) found that students enrolled in self -support evening programs have significantly better attitude towards the research than those enrolled in morning programs. The reason might be that evening students come to this field with more enthusiasm. Similarly, the prospective students with pre -medical background were found to have significantly better attitude towards the research than those who have arts and computer science as their previously studied subjects at higher secondary level.

In the study of Williams & Coles (2003), teachers of age group 20-30 years were founds to have significantly better attitude than the teachers with other age groups. Reason behind positive attitudes of 30 +age group respondents could be that this is the crucial stage of their career and hence they give high priority to the research.

Williams & Coles (2003) found that attitude towards the research varies significantly in relation to research experience. Teachers who are currently working on a research project or who conducted action research at some period of time had more positive attitude towards research.

Moreover, they found that the teachers at senior management positions have significantly better attitude towards the research than the others.

Butt & Shams (2013) explored research attitude of students of public and private sector universities in Pakistan and found that there is no significant difference in the students' research attitude. In the same way Iqbal (2010) also examined the research attitudes of students. He found significant differences in attitudes of prospective teachers from different teacher education degree programs. Several factors influence the students' attitude towards research. These factors include the gender of students as Saleem, Saeed, & Waheed (2014) identified that the research preferences of male and female students differ in the problem selection for research and selection of research supervisor. The attitude towards research basically means a detailed study of thinking, feeling and the person's behavior towards research. It also specifies how a person is acting in the research field and what importance is given by him to the different aspects of research.

In a study of the relationship between attitudes towards statistics and constructivist strategies used in the course, Mvududu (2003) found University of Zimbabwe students to be more susceptible to be controlled in the learning environment by those in authority than American students, making them more prone to be influenced by negative teaching methods. Further, in a study involving Zimbabwean "0" level students, Nyaumwe (2006) found the methods used in a significant number of schools to be based on teacher centred instructional approaches, particularly due to the difficulty for teachers to give up old habits and prejudices.

In addition to the above, from a research on Zimbabwean secondary school students performance in Mathematics, Wadesango and Dhliwayo (2012), revealed that many teachers did not use teaching aids frequently in their Mathematics lessons and they did not vary their teaching methods to include some learner centred methods. This has led many learners to fear mathematics and that many of them have negative attitudes towards the subject (Wadesango and Dhliwayo, 2012). It is significant to note that from the above researches, which cover a decade, teaching methods have, among others, been found to contribute towards students negative attitudes towards numeric subjects.

Females are usually supposed to look after domestic responsibilities so they consider research subject as a degree requirement. Another reason of the positive attitudes of males towards the research may be that they are more inclined towards mathematics, statistics and economics than the females (Lindsay, Breen, & Jenkins, 2010).

Attitudes are believed to influence performance (Mahmud, 2009). Thus, determining the students' attitudes towards quantitative research methods is essential as it would enable educators to develop and use suitable methodologies during the teaching and learning of this discipline in order to develop positive attitudes in the students which in turn would improve their performance in the discipline.

Methodology of the Study

Descriptive survey method was followed for this study. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The sample comprised of all the Master in Education students of Abasyn University which included 60 male and 40 female students. Overall 100 students were considered as the sample of the study. The research tool was a questionnaire.

Objective of the Study

1. To investigate Master in Education Student's attitude towards research.
2. To study the difference in interest level among Master in Education students.

Research Questions

1. What are the barriers to master students in research?
2. What recommendations the study would provide?

Population & Sample

The population of the study was all private sector universities in Khyberpahtunkhwa and all students of master of education. The sample was 100 master (M.Ed.) students of the private sectors universities.

Analysis and Interpretation

Data Analysis

Sr No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score
1	Research makes me anxious.	50 250	30 120	10 30	5 10	5 5	4.15
2	Research should be taught to all students.	30 150	20 80	15 45	15 30	20 20	3.25
3	Research is interesting.	10 50	10 40	10 30	30 60	40 40	2.2
4	I feel insecure concerning the analysis of research data.	20 100	20 80	20 60	20 40	20 20	3
5	Research is useful for my career.	40 200	20 80	10 30	15 30	15 15	3.55
6	I find it difficult to understand the concepts of research.	50 250	30 120	5 15	5 10	10 10	4.05
7	I have trouble with arithmetic.	40 200	30 120	10 30	10 20	10 10	3.8
8	Research is stressful.	55 275	35 140	3 9	2 4	5 5	4.33
9	Research makes me nervous.	50 250	40 160	5 15	3 6	2 2	4.33
10	Research is irrelevant to my life.	20 100	20 80	10 30	25 50	25 25	2.85
11	Research is complicated.	60 300	35 140	0 0	5 10	5 5	4.55
12	Research should be indispensable in my professional Training.	5 25	10 40	15 45	30 60	40 40	2.1
13	Research is difficult.	70 350	30 120	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.7
14	Research is a complex subject.	65 325	25 100	0 0	5 10	5 5	4.4
15	Librarian's attitude is supportive in library	5 25	10 40	15 45	30 60	40 40	2.1
16	Supervisors lack basic knowledge regarding research	50 250	40 160	5 15	3 6	2 2	4.33
17	Research is time taking	60 300	35 140	0 0	5 10	5 5	4.55
18	Adequate related literature is not available.	20 100	20 80	10 30	25 50	25 25	2.85

Discussion

Data Analysis Based on the Likert type questionnaire, the students' responses to the items were scored as follows: strongly agree-5, agree-4, undecided-3, disagree-2, strongly disagree-1, for positive items and reversed for negative ones. The analysis of the data was done into Mean Score values And the means scores are 4.1, 3.2, 2.2, 3.0, 3.4, 4.0, 4.3, 4.2, 2.8, 4.5, 2.1, 4.7, 4.4, 2.1, 4.3, 4.5, 2.8 for the statements in above table. The data in the above table showed that the students found the following difficulties in researches. In conducting a research study, the selection of topic, administering and distribution of questionnaire, Data gathering and availability of the respondents are found to be very difficult for the student-researchers. To approach unfamiliar respondents and convince them to answer the survey questionnaire could be very hard for the student-researchers. This kind of attitude affects the student-researchers, the retrieval of the questionnaires is very significant for them but they cannot force the respondents when they do not feel like accomplishing the questionnaire at all. The study determined the research attitudes of master of education students about research usefulness, research anxiety, positive attitudes, relevance to life, and difficulty of research. This study found that the students found that doctors who were currently engaged in research have more positive attitude towards the research and perceived research as less difficult. They also found that those doctors who were receiving post graduate training or those who previously trained or engaged in research were significantly more involved in the research than the others. Finally, it is worth mentioning to describe that the students enrolled in private universities perceived research usefulness to life significantly more than those students who were enrolled in the private sector universities. Significantly better perceived research usefulness to life in private sector universities in the current study can be attributed to the fact that in education discipline private sector is more quality conscious and competitive. Students are instructed to meet the requirement of global market. The students' attitudes towards research methods, techniques and all kinds of data analysis were not encouraging.

Conclusion

In the light of this study the researcher concludes that the learning which the student-researchers got from their class discussions and applied in the conduct of their research work is not the very reason that results in serious academic difficulties and failures. The cooperation of the chosen respondents beyond the academic institution is a very crucial problem. To some extent students also felt that those personal problems like time and stress management may disturb their concentration.

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All the teacher education programmes must emphasise to develop a research outlook among the teacher trainees irrespective of the level of the programmes. It may be in the form of action research in B.Ed. or a Dissertation in Master in Education. programme. In future it would help them in solving their classroom related problems in specific and in serving the society in general. One of the main objectives of these programmes must be to develop a favorable attitude towards research among them, so that they would soar the heights of excellence successfully in their future. Data also showed that research is difficult, time consuming, complex, wastage of time and stressful subject and complicated task to be done by the students at master level in education.

Assuming from the above given discussion, it can be safely concluded that research becomes difficult when certain difficulties are encountered. Above discussed data is a supportive view which reveals that almost all researchers were agreed to the fact that the above mentioned difficulties were common to all researchers. There was an extreme need to sort out those issues so that researchers could focus on research work instead of solving these inconveniences. Most students were confused by what college-level research entails. Other challenges were related to accessing resource materials, especially what students described as their inability to narrow down topics and make them manageable and their tendency to become overwhelmed by the plethora of available resources.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are advanced:

- (1) that student-researchers should establish friendly relation with their prospected subjects or respondents;
- (2) that time management topic be included in the discussion of the subject for the students to be more aware that time management is precious and this would aid them in establishing routines, setting goals, and understanding priorities in conducting a research study;
- (3) that the subject Research Method be offered in two semesters instead of one semester to give the student-researchers reasonable time to finish the required research output with high quality;
- (4) that the Dean of College of Arts and Sciences initiates the inclusion of the research courses to all programs offered for the students' basic knowledge about research work.

5. Lecturers in universities should use instructional methodologies that motivate students so that they overcome the seeming impossibilities in their learning of numerical courses.

6. Research subjects should be taught using methodologies that provoke critical thinking hence motivating the students

7. The fear of mathematics should be hindered from being generalized to similar numerical disciplines like quantitative research methods.

8. The education system should provide for and encourage the taking up of statistically based research oriented subjects at master level.

9. Research notes disseminated to students should include details about expectations for conducting quality research, including the use of the Internet.

10. Librarians should know about students' needs for individualized coaching, so that abilities to find, select, and evaluate resources may be improved.

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