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Academic Reading and Writing Challenges Faced by Doctoral Students in Peshawar, Pakistan: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The current qualitative study attempted to explore the perceptions of doctoral students in relation to the challenges and difficulties they faced during their research degrees. In recent years, substantial and rapid changes have been taking place in the higher educational sector of Pakistan. Most universities have started to place a premium on the enhancement and productivity of research in terms of the number of publications and PhD students' production. Despite this shift towards a focus on research productivity, universities in general and private universities in particular have been finding it a daunting challenge to provide essential facilities in line with the research needs of students and faculty. The sample of the study comprised of 10 doctoral students, from 5 private sector universities in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. The sample was selected through purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was analysed using thematic analysis. The current study contributed to the understanding pertaining to the issue in several ways: (1) This study enriched the current literature about writing and reading difficulties of Pakistani doctoral students, (2), The study highlighted loopholes in doctoral studies/courses/programs in Pakistan and identified areas that need revision and improvement to help and improve doctoral studies. The findings revealed several challenges faced by doctoral students. These challenges include academic reading and writing difficulties, lack of requisite computer software application knowledge and skills, problems in supervisors' role, ill-equipped libraries, and outdated course work content. The study also carries important implications in terms of providing insights into the issues and challenges faced by PhD Education students in Pakistan.

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*Keywords***:** academic reading, academic writing, doctoral students, Pakistan

Introduction

Doctoral degree holders not only represent a competent human resource, but they are also supposed to contribute to the economic and social development of a country. However, the research shows that there has been a growing concern regarding the difficulties that research students in general and doctoral students in particular face in academic reading and writing in English (Khan et al., 2016; Pyhältö et al., 2012). This challenge is more pronounced in the case of students who need to do their academic writing in English, although their first language is not English (Luo & Hyland, 2016; Olsson & Sheridan, 2012). Early career academics and research students often face challenges in producing quality research and in publishing it in good quality peer reviewed journals (Kamler, 2008). It is quite a formidable challenge for PhD students and junior researchers to publish their research works in good quality journals, either as a part of their doctoral thesis or as independent researchers. Research in the context of non-English speaking countries indicates that PhD students face multiple problems during the write up of their thesis and later while publishing in academic journals as well. This puts such research students in a disadvantaged position in the academic field (Gopee & Deane, 2013).

Various reasons have been associated with this issue including weak English educational background of research students, lack of institutional support, and low quality feedback from supervisors (Buckingham, 2008). The lack of support for research students from institutions and supervisors put these students in a difficult situation which often leads to low-self-esteem and lack of confidence in their ability to complete their thesis and become independent academic writers (Gopee & Deane, 2013; Morton et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2016; Langum & Sullivan, 2017; Luo & Hyland, 2016). Pakistan is one of the countries offering higher education in English, that is, the second language. Majority of school-age children receive their early education in Urdu, which puts them at a disadvantage as they pursue their higher education. This situation becomes more challenging for those students who opt for research degrees (MS and PhD) (Halai, 2011a, 2011b; Khan et al., 2016). Keeping this background in view, the current study attempted to explore PhD students' experiences and perceptions pertaining

to the difficulties they encounter in developing their PhD proposals and thesis writing phases.

Context of the Study

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan established National Quality Assurance Committee in 2003 to maintain and enhance the quality of higher education in Pakistan and to improve the quality of research of university graduates (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, 2013). Recent research in the Pakistani context has highlighted some of the issues of the PhD programs and of research students (Halai, 2011a, 2011b; Khan et al., 2016; Shah, 2010). The current study was conducted in 5 private sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. These universities offer MS/MPhil and PhD level courses and Education is one of the main faculties in each of these universities. Students studying PhD degrees need to complete their two semesters' coursework successfully. The coursework includes several academic subjects, but no specialized courses are offered that aim at developing academic reading and writing skills of the research students.

Khan et al. (2016), in the context of higher education in KPK, Pakistan investigated the perspectives of faculty members and students on academic writing. The study concluded that the students' lack of knowledge and expertise regarding the academic reading and writing puts them in a disadvantageous position while trying to write an academic text.

Literature Review

An important factor in the academic success of research students is their ability and competency in academic reading and writing skills. Buckingham (2008) found that university students' main problems in terms of academic writing included problems in grammar, punctuation, and lucid expression in academic English. This according to Buckingham (2008) resulted in negative impact on students' ability in the academic writing.

Literature reviewed also identify steps including workshops and training programs before and during the course-work programs of research students (Suliman & Tadros, 2011). Research also highlights the importance of supervisor's role in the development of research students' academic writing. According to Barnes and Austin (2009) and Gardner (2010) the role of supervisor is significant in different phases of PhD proposal and thesis writing in developing research students as independent and competent

researchers and academic writers. Gopee and Deane ([2013](#)) found that PhD students did not get adequate support and guidance from their supervisors. Studies by Huang ([2010](#)), and Langum and Sullivan ([2017](#)) reported that PhD students faced problems including lack of proper help and support and vague feedback besides communication gap between students and supervisors.

In the Pakistani context, Khan at al. ([2016](#)) found that at the university level there was a general lack of academic reading, writing and critical thinking skills that often led to poor quality academic output.

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative, exploratory research design. The sample of the study consisted of 10 PhD education students from 5 private sector universities in the Peshawar District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The sample was taken using purposive and snowball sampling techniques which are useful sampling techniques in qualitative, exploratory studies (Cohen & Arieli, [2011](#); Waters, [2015](#)). The sample consisted of students who had completed their PhD course work and were in their thesis proposal writing phase. The total number of the PhD students at the time of data collection was 15, five females and ten males. Accessing female research students proved difficult because of cultural barrier since women feel hesitation to meet males.

The sampling procedure adopted for this study was aimed to have a diversity of experiences from the PhD students. Therefore, the respondents represented students from Departments of Education in all the private sector universities. The reason behind selection of the sample from private sector universities was that these universities have been awarding MS and PhD degrees on a more persistent and frequent level in comparison to the public sector universities. One of the authors of this study had been a PhD student in a private university, and his positionality helped to get insider look into the problems faced by the students. This positionality also helped the researchers in identifying and getting access to information rich respondents. Table 1 presents an overview of the sample respondents.

Table 1

A Brief Profile of the Sample Respondents

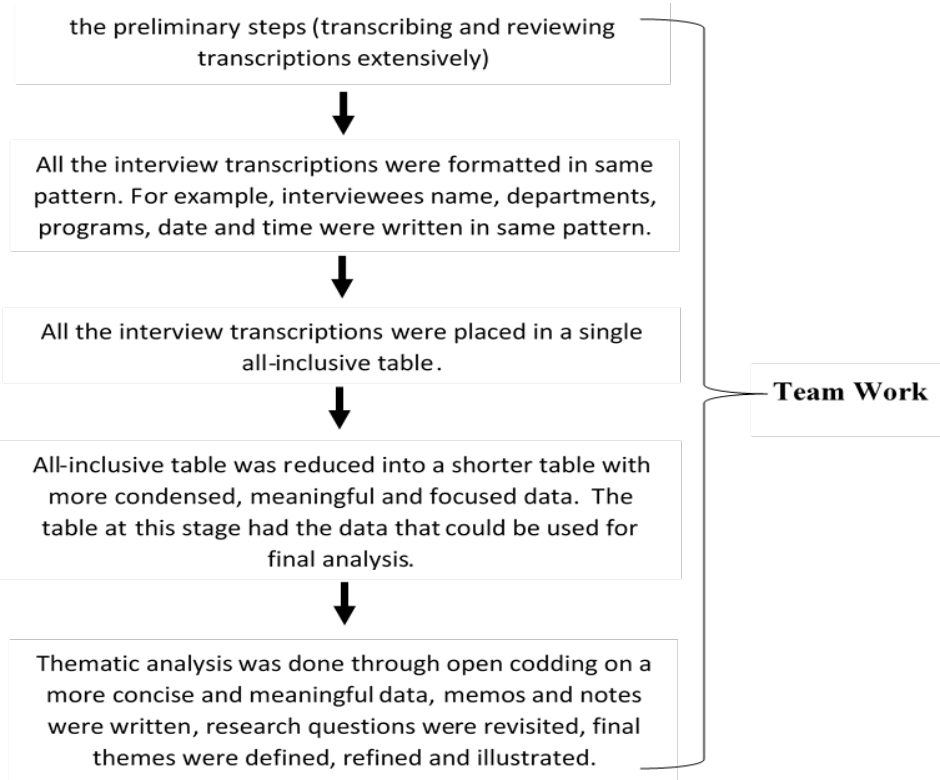| S. No	Respondent name (pseudonyms)	Previous research experience	Nature/design of ph.d. Thesis
1	Ali	At MS (Education) level	Qualitative
2	Jawad	None	Quantitative
3	Asad	At MS (Education) level	Quantitative
4	Gul	None	Quantitative
5	Zaman	None	Quantitative
6	Tariq	None	Quantitative
7	Noor	At MS (Education) level	Quantitative
8	Wajid	At MS (Education) level	Quantitative
9	Waheed	At MS (Education) level	Quantitative
10	Najeeb	None	Quantitative

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed to collect qualitative data (Breen, 2006). The semi-structured interview is one of the main data collection methods used in the social sciences to examine the perspectives and experiences of research respondents (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all the research students and were asked the same questions, such as: what was your previous medium of instruction at school, college, and university; what reading and writing challenges you encountered as you started the thesis writing phase; were you able to evaluate academic literature critically; and how do you evaluate the contribution of your research supervisor to the development of academic reading and writing skills. The interviews were audio-recorded through smart-phone voice recorder, with the agreement of the research students and were later on transcribed for analysis.

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis and Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction (RADaR) Technique (Watkins, 2017; Saldana, 2009). According to Watkins (2017), this data analysis is a wide-ranging, faster and accurate qualitative data analysis technique. This is a team-based technique where more than one researcher are involved in data analysis. In this technique, simple computer programs such as Microsoft Word or Excel can be used for data analysis instead of purchased qualitative data analysis software packages.

Analysis involved different stages of improvement called 'data reduction' where accurate data was obtained. In the initial stage of RADaR, it was ensured to have similar data in same files. In the next stage of RADaR, the data was arranged in tabular form for better understanding. In the third stage data was logically and systematically reduced to tabular form to extract the texts from interviews to support and elaborate on themes. In the fourth and fifth stages the data was further refined and merged into themes and sub-themes. Figure 1 below presents the steps used for data analysis.

Figure 1
Data Analysis Steps Based on (Watkins, 2017) RADaR Technique

the preliminary steps (transcribing and reviewing transcriptions extensively)

↓

All the interview transcriptions were formatted in same pattern. For example, interviewees name, departments, programs, date and time were written in same pattern.

↓

All the interview transcriptions were placed in a single all-inclusive table.

↓

All-inclusive table was reduced into a shorter table with more condensed, meaningful and focused data. The table at this stage had the data that could be used for final analysis.

↓

Thematic analysis was done through open codding on a more concise and meaningful data, memos and notes were written, research questions were revisited, final themes were defined, refined and illustrated.

Team Work

The terms validity and reliability are more appropriate in the context of quantitative research design. As far as qualitative research is concerned, these terms are replaced with trustworthiness (Morse et al., 2020). As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argues that various strategies could be applied to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research:

1. Credibility (internal validity): it can be achieved through triangulation of methods.

2. Dependability or consistency (reliability): it can be fulfilled by peer-reviews and audit-trial and detail description.

3. "Transferability (external validity): which can be adopted by careful selection of sample and thick-description.

4. In addition, for them, "ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves investigating ethically" (p. 237).

Thus, in this exploratory study, the consistency was ensured by interview transcriptions were validated by research students and the selection of sample was selected with an audit-trail for transferability and thick-description. One of the authors held face to face interviews with the research students to ensure its trustworthiness, detail of research respondents, data collection process, and analysis are mentioned in the methodology.

Keeping ethical considerations in mind the respondents were handed over information sheet of this study. After their agreement for the study, an informed consent was taken from them. Anonymity and confidentiality issues were addressed using appropriate research strategies including the use of pseudonym for respondents in the research report and keeping the recorded interviews and transcripts in safety.

Analysis of the data obtained through interviews revealed six broad themes: academic reading difficulties, academic writing difficulties, inadequate role of the supervisors, ill-equipped libraries, and outdated coursework and lack of understanding in the use of computer-based software.

Academic Reading Difficulties

Several difficulties were identified related to reading for academic purpose. Most respondents argued that the main reading problem they faced in their PhD proposal and thesis writing phases was their lack of ability to understand the technical language used in educational research writing. This inability often hindered respondents' understanding of the nature of research text and the link between its different parts. As one PhD student argued:

> The first and the main deficiency I came across was my inability to understand the specific vocabulary of the educational research that is, jargon of the subject. Most of the times I used dictionary, which often distracted me from the content or from the main idea of the text while reading. When I used to consult the dictionary, there the meanings were in general form but as I came back to the paper where these were used, the meanings were different contextually so the understanding the terminology of educational research was a great problem for me. That was the most time-consuming period. I used to read academic text but was unable to grasp the main idea of that text. (Ali)

Similar views were shared by Najeeb who said: "I was not able to understand vocabulary of the academic and research fields. That's why I used to take long time to understand the research article".

Other respondents also argued that their lack of knowledge about the specific educational research terminologies hindered their ability to understand academic text. Jawad for instance shared the experiences of his academic reading difficulties, arguing:

> It was difficult for me to understand the terminology and the vocabulary of research. I was unable to understand the nature of the article whether it is qualitative or quantitative, how to study the article and its different parts.

Likewise, Zaman commented that the main problem he faced was developing an understanding around terminology used in research papers. Overall, it came to fore that respondents faced problems in understanding the language, technical jargon and specific research vocabulary used in academic papers and books. This resulted in slowing down their pace of reading and comprehension of the text.

Academic Writing Difficulties

Respondents identified several difficulties they faced in attempting to write for academic purposes. Lack of understanding of academic text appeared to have, a negative impact on writing and critical thinking abilities of research students. As pointed out in the previous theme, most of the students faced difficulties in reading that spilled over into their academic writing difficulties. Ali narrated his experience of difficulty in writing:

> If you ask me what the crux of this text is, I would be unable to communicate that idea of that piece of a text. Since I am unable to understand the context and text of the research study, so how could I be able to communicate and to apply critical thinking.

Likewise, another student shared his experience:

> In the beginning, I did not know about how to write introduction, literature review and even the thesis. How to apply critical thinking. My first draft of thesis was scattered, and it did not have any consistency with research questions, methodology and findings. I was also unable to link the contrasting views, ideas in a paragraph. (Jawad)

Tariq, who was in his PhD proposal writing phase pointed out his deficiencies as follows:

> I faced problems in how to write research questions, using different words-appropriate academic words. How to carry out literature review, how to paraphrase the text and how to incorporate that in thesis. English grammatical issues were also a problem for me during writing my proposal.

Data revealed that majority of the students believed that they were unable to paraphrase the text, carry out literature review, and write in-text citations and create bibliography of their proposals and theses. "At the beginning, I used to do referencing manually. I did not know it could be done by using some software", mentioned Waheed. Similarly, Tariq told:

> I faced problems in how to paraphrase the text and then to incorporate it into my proposal and thesis, how to carry out literature review, from where to get relevant literature, that is from which website or source etc. How to do in-text citations, how to write references towards the end of my thesis.

The above excerpts from respondents' interviews indicate the kind of writing difficulties they experienced in their theses writing phase. The main issues that came out included their lack of ability to write introduction, literature review and methodology, paraphrasing the text and writing in-text citations and bibliography. Thus, difficulties in writing ranged from the more technical ones to those that related to broader issues encompassing competence in English language use and in critical thinking skills.

Inadequate Supervision

Inadequate supervision on the part of supervisors also came out as an important problem faced by research students. Majority of the students indicated concern regarding their supervisors for their lack of research capabilities and academic writing skills. Najeeb argued, "the role of my supervisor in my academic reading and writing skills was nil. He did not have the skills to train future researchers. His feedback on my thesis was of low quality". Ali who was the only student whose thesis was qualitative in nature talked about his supervisor's role as:

> My supervisor just corrected simple grammatical mistakes, put this comma here, put this word there, and put this bracket here and so on. But the most important area of research is developing academic writing skills and instilling critical thinking abilities of a student. Here my supervisor was not of much help to me; he did not even recommend me any literature or reading material for study.

Another student shared:

> My supervisor did not know about the use of SPSS and was not good in statistics; his English writing skills were also inadequate. I got little help from him in academic writing and reading. I was not satisfied with him. I personally had doubts about the capacity of my university supervisor who did not teach things which were pre-requisites for a future researcher. Our supervisors dodged us, often. (Jawad)

Likewise, Waheed who had submitted his thesis for internal and external evaluation, said:

> Supervisors have no specialty in their fields; the feedback or remarks they pass on my work are sometimes really discouraging. He further added: the supervisors were over-burdened, they were supervising more students than the official limits, and this led to low level of supervision and lack of time on the part of supervisors for us.

In contrast to the above stated experiences of the students, a few students had positive views about their supervisors. As Wajid expressed: "My supervisor has positive role in developing my academic writing skills. She has good command of English. She has been very cooperative and nice in

the whole process of my research proposal and later on thesis writing phases."

Zaman, who had recently passed his coursework exam and was going to write his proposal stated, "my supervisor is cooperative, she used to take us to library and practically she guided us how to write the thesis introduction, literature review and methodology etc."

Overall, most of the problems which research students faced with their supervisors were their lack of research skills, low quality feedbacks, lack of skills in instilling academic reading and writing skills, and their lack of know-how about statistical issues. But some of the students termed their interaction with their supervisors positive and productive. This, however, was a minority view.

Equipped Libraries

An important finding was that most of the students had problems with their university libraries. The problems they identified included lack of relevant literature relating to academic reading and writing and related quality books and journals that could help them in their PhD theses writing phase. Asad said, "my university library did not help me, since there was lack of literature relating to academic reading and writing. I used my home internet to access literature for my study". This, however, he argued was not very systematic and authentic as a process to locate quality literature for his thesis. Similarly, another student added, "my university library was short of quality material. There were some old theses, but their quality was low, so I had to use Higher Education Commission (HEC) digital library in Islamabad" (Jawad). The same voice echoed in the statement of Waheed, "in my university there is nothing on academic writing skills. I used HEC digital library but its access to literature is limited. I personally used net". Noor shared similar experiences with his university library, "there were no relevant books or journals to take guidance for academic reading and writing. I used the Internet as a main source to access literature for my study purposes".

The presentation above indicates that universities libraries were ill-equipped and did not have adequate academic reading and writing books or related literature to take guidance from. Some of the students complained having limited access to HEC digital library. Their main sources of access were their home internet but internet itself is not an adequate source of

authentic academic material which often results in weak review of literature and discussion sections in students' research theses.

Outdated Course Work and Unavailability of Learning Opportunities in Universities

In most Pakistani universities, PhD education students need to take two semesters coursework before they begin the process of formal research. During the coursework students have to study different subjects related to their fields and at the end of the one-year coursework they have to take a comprehensive exam in order to qualify for proposal and thesis writing phases. The sixth theme was related to the students' perceptions relating to the coursework through which they had passed, all of them showed their dissatisfaction regarding the content, relevance, and quality of the coursework. As Jawad pointed out:

> The present coursework is mostly useless and outdated. It is simply a repetition of what we have studied in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and Master of Education (M.Ed). There is not much that is new and interesting to our current needs.

Wajid termed the coursework as a waste of time, and said, "The present coursework is useless and waste of time. It has not much to offer to the students in terms of their research and academic requirements" (Wajid). Noor labelled the present coursework of the PhD Education students as out of touch with reality. He stated, "the present course is outdated and out of touch with reality". According to Ali the present coursework did not meet the requirements of the students. Most respondents stressed the need for change and reform in the present coursework. For example, Waheed suggested,

> The coursework needs to be reformed and amended according to the requirements of the students' present and future academic needs. Asad added, 'The present course work is mostly useless. It should be discarded and replaced with something that meet the students' requirements in job market.

In addition to outdated coursework and libraries, one of the major reasons behind academic reading and writing challenges of education doctoral students was unavailability of learning opportunities in universities. Universities often offer trainings and workshops to provide an opportunity to the doctoral students to learn and improve their academic

reading and writing skills as well as to learn the use of updated research software and techniques. The data analysis revealed that the participants did not have such opportunities in their universities. In this regard Tariq requested, "most of the students are weak in English and face problems in writing …university should conduct more and more workshops and trainings on academic writing and reading". Gul added:

> A full and complete training on SPSS and other data analysis software should be available for students… to enable the students that how to carry out statistical tests on the data ... Most of the students have problems in this important aspect of the research process.

The participants considered a four-semester coursework insufficient and stressed on more opportunities for learning. The excerpts below from the interview of a participant suggest this:

> My Educational background is in Urdu and Pashto…Before PhD I did not have any research writing experience. I did MS in Education where research was optional so I did not take research and opted for extra course work…I think we should be given trainings on article writing and two or three papers publication should be made mandatory while PhD students are in their course work so there academic reading and writing skills can be improved.

Lack of Understanding in the Use of Computer Based Software

Research students' inability to utilize computer-based software for academic purposes came out as an important issue they faced in their academic pursuits. Most respondents indicated frustration regarding their inability to make effective use of statistical tools, software programs for their data analysis and presentation. Noor pointed out, *"the most worrying issue that I encountered in my thesis was my inability to understand that which statistical tool was to use, how to construct a research tool, how analysis should be carried out"* (Noor). Likewise, Asad mentioned, "the main problems I faced included problems in data analysis chapter: statistical issues and the interpretation of these tests" (Asad). Similarly, Zaman argued, "my main problem is that I don't know about SPSS and its use. No body taught us this useful software application".

Some of the students in this study pointed out to their difficulties in constructing questionnaires using software for their theses. As one of them told, "I do not know how to construct a questionnaire for my thesis. I have taken readymade questionnaire without any change according to the context of my study*"* (Jawad). Respondents indicated lack of understanding about the application of MS office and Excel software. Gul, who was a doctoral student, expressed his views, "as I got enrolled in PhD program, I suddenly came across the difficulty: lack of computer skills and using MS office and Excel programs". Similar words were echoed by Wajid who shared, "one of the main problems that I faced was my lack of basic understanding of the use of MS office and PDF for academic purposes" (Wajid).

The above presentation highlights the basic issues faced by respondents which included lack of understanding of the use of SPSS, their inability of interpretation of the results, constructing questionnaires and other data collection tools, and their lack of basic understanding of MS office and PDF utilization.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify academic reading and writing challenges of PhD research students in the discipline of education. The findings showed that one of the main problems PhD Education students faced in their academic reading and writing was lack of understanding regarding the specific vocabulary and terminology of educational research. This lack of understanding hampered these research students' ability to comprehend the research texts, and as a result proved the most time-consuming period for them, slowing down their comprehension ability. In addition, the students also pointed out the problems they faced in English grammar, and vocabulary. Buckingham (2008) has also come up with similar findings in similar contexts. Zhao (2017) also found that non-native English students are in disadvantaged position while writing academically, as compared to native English speakers. Most of the respondents shared that they lacked the critical thinking skill and its application in their PhD theses. Since objective writing is the part of academic writing skill, if the students lack that ability, it means they lacked critical thinking skills (Phakiti & Li, 2011; Khan et al., 2016) an essential quality required of university level students in general and research students in particular. According to Gopee and Deane (2013) Non-Native English students at the university level often indicate general weakness in academic writing skills, the problems are more

visible in their lack of skills to use of appropriate words, referencing style, bringing coherence in their text, and in meeting the academic writing standards. This negatively impacts their ability to write professionally. Most of the students in this study reported that their difficulties in reading had a negative impact on their writing skills. Respondents also identified their lack of ability regarding the adequate use of appropriate academic words, general grammatical issues, doing in-text citations and making bibliography. Similar findings also came from studies by Huang (2010), Phakiti and Li (2011), and Khan et al. (2016). Taken together, these studies have pointed out different academic reading and writing issues of university students such as lack of critical thinking abilities and lack of curriculum and training in the institutions where they studied.

Besides, most of the PhD students identified their inability in the use of SPSS and interpretation of the results. Most respondents also reported facing difficulties in analysis chapters. Although, as indicated by the respondents' profile 9 out of 10 respondents were doing quantitative research for their PhDs, where the use and understanding of SPSS is mandatory, they did not have adequate knowledge in the use of MS Office, Excel and PDF programs which hampered their ability to utilize the ICTs in their theses. This is a matter of concern as Phakiti and Li (2011) report that lack of information and communication technology (ICT) understanding badly affected the university students' ability to utilize it for their benefits.

It was interesting to note that most of the students in this study showed dissatisfaction over their supervisors' role. Students reported that their supervisors lacked adequate research and academic writing skills. This, according to them, resulted in low quality and sometimes discouraging feedback. This negatively affected their abilities to develop academic writing skills and critical thinking ability. Buckingham (2008) found that Non-English Speaking university students reported inadequate support from their supervisors. Other studies have similar findings for example Huang (2010), Gopee and Deane (2013). According to Barnes and Austin (2009), and Batool et al. (2021) the role of supervisor is imperative in helping and developing their students to be independent researchers and academic writers (Gardner, 2010). The views of most of the students in this study indicated that the role of their theses supervisors was not helpful which affected the students' academic reading and writing abilities.

According to Gopee and Deane (2013) the role of adequate library facilities in building the academic reading and writing skills and solving related problems of the university students is significant. That the current study indicated that libraries were ill-quipped, having lack of quality resources. As a result, most of the students reported using HEC digital library and internet facility in their homes. Course work, which is a compulsory part of the PhD studies, came out as not useful and was termed outdated. This is an important issue and points out the need for reinvigoration and revision of the PhD coursework material (Murtaza & Hui, 2021).

Implications and Conclusion

This study has several implications. Foremost, given the importance of academic reading and writing skills for PhD students, universities in Pakistan and elsewhere with similar context, may implement and institutionalize academic reading and writing courses for the research students, since the students in this study pointed out this lack of ability as a major challenge. Besides, the libraries of the universities may be updated and equipped with relevant books and literature to facilitate the students in their research process. The study also indicates that there should be institutional mechanisms in place for developing the critical thinking and academic writing skills of research students.

For ensuring appropriate support and services for developing quality research and researchers the universities may appoint competent and skilled supervisors who can be cooperative and resourceful for their students in terms of developing their research skills and academic reading and writing abilities. Students' skills in the use of software aimed at quantitative and qualitative data analysis may also be enhanced through the provision of facilities and training on campus.

Limitations and Future Research

Keeping in view the limited, qualitative nature of the study and its contextual and geographical delimitation, the findings of the study might not be generalized to all doctoral students in the country or elsewhere. The current exploratory study, however, may provide useful insights into the issue and may result in the initiation and conduct of further studies with larger quantitative samples in Pakistan and elsewhere with similar contexts. It is also suggested further studies might be conducted in other fields of

social sciences for greater generalization and comparison across a variety of academic fields and subjects. Besides, studies might also be conducted based on comparisons of the issues and problems faced by research students in private and public sector universities.

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