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Students' Attitudes toward Research: An Empirical Study of MPhil Students at Universities in Turbat, Balochistan
Nazeer Ahmed Baloch

Ph.D. Scholar, Faculty of Education, University of Sindh Hyderabad, Sindh

nazeerwasto78@gmail.com
Dr. Abdul Majid Nasir

Assistant Professor, University of Turbat Balochistan

abdul.majid@uot.edu.pk
Nadia Nazeer

BS, Department of Sociology

nadianazeerahmed572@gmail.com
Abstract

The title of this research article is Students Attitudes towards Research, An Empirical Study on MPhil Students at University at, Balochistan and the authors aimed to establish the trends of responses of MPhil students to research-related experiences. The research design was used a quantitative survey research, which sought to establish the attitude of the students towards research. The population of the study is comprised 60 MPhil students enrolled in various departments of the university. The sample of the study is consisted of 40 MPhil scholar in respective department. Data were collected from the study subject, convinced sampling method was employed to collect data. Questionnaires was administrated to the subjects, five point Likert scale was used to collect responses of the participants. There were four variables in the questionnaire, the Research usefulness, (RU) Research anxiety (RA), Positive attitudes (PA) and Research Difficulties (RD) and the reliability test provided a Cronbachs alpha of 0.70 with a decisive ruling in favor of good internal consistency. Interpretation of the data was done using the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) in SPSS 23. The findings gave an impression of the general research attitude of MPhil scholars who noted patterns in perceptions, engagement and reactions to research experiences.

Keywords: Research Attitudes, Research Anxiety, Research Difficulties

INTRODUCTION

Research is an essential part of higher education especially postgraduate education, where students are supposed to acquire critical thinking, analyzing skills and learn to be able to inquire independently. Research participation is a mandatory degree requirement, but also an essential step to becoming effective scholars and knowledge production contributors at the MPhil level (Creswell, J. W., 2014). Attitudes of students towards the research undertakings contribute greatly to the motivation, involvement and ultimate performance in research undertakings (Papanastasiou, E. C., 2005).

Over the recent years, the perception of postgraduate students in relation to research and the issues faced by them during the course of the research process has been in the limelight of growing interest. Good attitude towards research correlates with increased levels of engagement as well as better performance at school and generation of innovative ideas (Brew, A., 2001). Negative attitudes on the other hand, including anxiety, deficiency of confidence or

relevancy of the research, can act as obstacle to students progress and diminish the quality of their academic work (Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Wilson, V. A., 2003).

In the framework of Turbat universities in Balochistan, the improvement of a powerful research culture is still an up-and-coming need. Regardless of the institutional initiatives aimed at encouraging research activities, anecdotal evidence shows that MPhil students exhibit different levels of interest, confidence, and interest in research. Such differences can be attributed to various aspects such as fewer previous exposure to research, insufficient academic support, or even resource deprivation and doubt in the practical importance of research in future professions (Healey, M. & Jenkins, A., 2009).

Since research is a critical component of postgraduate education, an analysis of MPhil attitudes towards research and determining the factors that affect these attitudes is crucial. The insights into these perceptions can be used to assist educators and policymakers to create effective strategy to promote the research abilities of students and create supportive academic experience.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to examine student views on research on MPhil level in Turbat based universities in Balochistan. It also aims to uncover the hidden elements that influence such attitudes and estimating their impacts on the academic development and the future participation of the students in research activities.

Research Attitudes

The result of the degree to which the students perceive research to be useful in their profession; a research process that they perceive to be relevant to their life in general; a research attitude that they believe to be positive; anxiety about research; and is one of the students finding research methodology daunting is how he defined attitude towards research (Panastasiou 2005). Practical experience in teaching research methodology and the evidence described in the literature indicate that students are usually anxious (Bolin, GlenMaye, Hag Lee and Yoon 2012; Kracker 2002) and feel negatively or have negative attitude towards taking a compulsory course in research methodology (Panastasiou and Zembylas 2008). Onwuegbuzie (2003) goes a notch higher than that, indicating that some students can even consider the teachers of research methodology modules, as the ones who can open the doors to their degrees. The role of the attitudes on the behavioral intentions is well known particularly marketing literature (Curran and Rosen 2006) and the negative attitudes of the students can thus serve as a barrier to their learning or even to their performance in a module (Panastasiou 2005) or in future modules of research. Onwuegbuzie (1997) goes as far as to suggest that the fact that even those students who had previously completed a course in research methodology were unprepared when engaging in masters/doctoral studies may be because of their unfriendly attitudes towards research. In a quantitative approach study, Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Paterson, Watson and Schwartz (2000) discovered that research anxiety had a negative correlation with achievement. The attitudes, according to Panastasiou (2005) can be used to establish how much an individual is willing to spend on learning a particular topic like research and that there will be difference of choice of higher level courses in the realms of research as compared to minimum requirements. Equally, it is also assumed that a more positive attitude towards research will also translate into intrinsic motivation to research (Evans 2011) - therefore the significance of evaluating and modulating attitudes of students towards research.

Problems statement

It is instrumental to inculcate the attitude of being research-minded amongst the MPhil scholars especially on the MPhil level to enhance knowledge and progress towards the generations of self-reliant scholars. Still, based on anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations, MPhil

students at the University of Turbat, can be more or less engaging in and positive regarding research. Such variability may be the result of a complex interaction between a number of factors, such as prior research experience, perceived relevance of research to their career objectives, institutional support, and individual self-efficacy. Without a consistent good-positive attitude towards research, students who are not academically advanced may not achieve their academic goals, quality of research outputs and their potential contribution to their respective areas. The paper thus aims to examine the disposition of MPhil students in the University towards research, what influences these disposition and what the possible implication of these disposition are to their academic progression and future research activities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine MPhil students' responses toward research-related experiences.

HO1: There is no significant difference in MPhil students' responses toward research-related experiences.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of the study is that it examines the perceptions of MPhil students towards research which is a vital aspect of higher education and academic progression. Knowing the perceptions, interests, and problems that students may have regarding research can enable universities to enhance the quality of postgraduate research training and supervision.

This research will also be of help to the students because they will be able to identify the usual challenges, fears and positive incentives relating to research. This understanding can ensure that the students become better prepared and embrace strategies on how to conduct research effectively.

To teachers and supervisors, the study gives insight on the attitudes of the students, which allows them to structure a more conducive, engaging and student oriented research environment. It can also assist in enhancing practices and guidance methods in mentorship.

University administrators and policymakers will also find the study valuable because they can now provide evidence-based information that they can use to change curricula to better suit their purposes, to create research support programs, and to administer workshops or training sessions to increase their research skills.

Moreover, through the analysis of attitudes to gender, the research will help demonstrate any differences or disparities among male and female students. This can assist in ensuring the advancement of gender equity in research opportunities and academic provision.

Lastly, this research contributes to the body of understanding in the area of educational research especially in post graduate studies and can be used by other researchers in future who may want to conduct studies on the same areas.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is delimited to the students enrolled in the respective department (Department of Chemistry, Department of Management Science and Institute of Balochi at the University of Turbat Balochistan. The study is focused only on students' attitudes toward research and gender differences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies are also becoming an important competency among undergraduates in all fields. Research helps in problem solving, critical thinking and creation of knowledge as critical thinking has been oriented towards the twenty first century skill that is required by the leaders of the modern day. Several policy document analysis, teacher views and practices studies at the national and international level have been narrowed down to it.

However, the motivation and performance of research related course-work and activities is immensely influenced by the intent of the students towards research. Various studies have defined diversity that undergraduate students have concerning research. The attitude towards research is articulated in terms of acquiescent or resistant with the students exhibiting a mixed attitude. Thus, we had those studies that provided a favorable review of faculty work and those that simply did not find it worth appreciating. Where students view research as a subject of interest and even importance in future career (Siamian et al., 2016), others view research as a challenging and stressful experience that has little to do with the professional goals that they hope to achieve by theorizing challenging emotional experiences through a formal meaning-making process: both informal theorizing challenging emotional experiences in such a manner. The research training course appears to be an effective predictor of good attitudes. Greater research experience in graduate students who had a self-efficacy reported more positive attitudes (Rezaei and Miandashti, 2013). Kumari et al. (2018) on the same found that students who were against the research condition positively oriented themselves towards research than students who were not exposed to the same and had formal research training. Institutional factors influencing the perception of students involve e.g., research facilities, accessibility and availability of mentorship of faculty members, academic culture in university, and others (Soe et al., 2018). Curriculum: Research methodology courses, research projects should be included in the curriculum, which will increase interest and competence of students in research. In this manner, personal factors that influence the research attitudes include self-confidence, motivation and past performance in school. By gender -mixed studies have investigated gender attitudes towards research have found that both opposite sex students possess attitudinal orientations towards research (Bibi et al., 2012; Hussain et al., 2016; Levine, 2007). The other research investigated positive attitude development of student teachers in terms of knowledge and skills (Linden et al., 2012). Oguan et al. (2014) investigated the attitude and anxiety, associated with the research and its effects on the achievement of students. Another study, by Muthuswamy et al. (2017), has explored six factors that make the doctoral students have their attitudes towards research. A study conducted by Shaukat et al. (2014) found out the attitude of postgraduate students towards research. In various ongoing studies, research supervision was used to explore the areas of research interest in the Pakistani context (Iqbal et al., 2022; Riffat and Muhammad, 2019; Zafar et al., 2021). A less significant amount of research is conducting a direct comparison of attitude between academic disciplines. Medical students, among whom this study was conducted (Siamian et al., 2016) have a rather positive attitude due to the focus on evidence-based practice in healthcare as their personal interest in research and their awareness and career ambitions. There is a need for supportive policies and encouragement from the administration for student-led research initiatives and recognition and rewards for research accomplishments. Basudan et al. (2019) reported positive sentiments among dental students who were associated with perceived advantages of research to professional development. Additional research is required to look into possible differences within natural sciences, social.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a quantitative research therefore a survey research design was employed to examine the MPhil student's attitudes towards research. The sample of the study was 40 students pursuing MPhil in respective department. Convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample. One of the questions which facilitated the study is a questionnaire that was developed by Papanastasiou in 2005. The tool is normally used to determine attitude of the students towards a research. Questionnaire was based on 20 statements having five point Likert scale levels of response categories down to strongly disagree (SDA) to strongly agree (SA). Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 was used for data analysis. The descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to analyze data. There were four factors and 20 items in questionnaire. The value of alpha or Cronbach was found to be 0.7, indicating that research attitude.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population is utilized in showing a huge population within which the researcher will seek representatives to further investigate (Gay, 2012). The population of the study is comprised of (35) female MPhil students and (25) Male students in respective departments.

Table population of the study

District	Public Universities	Population of the study	
		Male	Female
Turbat	University of Turbat	35	25
		MPHil students	
Total	1	35	25

Participants

In this study, the sample will be a group of 40 students in the respective departments who had already been admitted in the University of Turbat. The participating students were MPhil students in the three departments, Chemistry, Balochi and English. There were (23) Females and (17).

Sample of the study

District	Public Universities	Sample of the study		
		Male	Female	Sampling
Kech	University Turbat	17	23	Convenience Sampling
		MPHil students		

RESEARCH TOOLS:

The questionnaires Likert scale 5.0 were edited and used to get the research outcomes of the MPhil students about their research attitudes. The study included four elements in a questionnaire, which included research usefulness, research anxiety, positive attitudes and research difficulties.

Reliability can be viewed as an ability of a test, a tool or a procedure to give similar results when used by different scholars or be used in different issues and environment. The concept of reliability is conceptualized that the extent of consistency of the measures of the same thing (Yogesh k Sing, 2006). The variables were found to have a Cronbach Alpha of the research usefulness (RU), research anxiety (RA) positive attitudes (PA) and research difficulties (RD) of 0.690 and 0.71 respectively which is very reliable. There were four variables on each questionnaire and therefore the reliability statistics was added to the as well.

Variables	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha
<i>RU</i>	5	.690
<i>RA</i>	5	.706
<i>PA</i>	5	.710
<i>RD</i>	5	.709

Profile of the students (n =40)

Table 1 Demographic Distribution of Respondents According to Gender & program of study. (n=40)

Variable	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>	Male	17	42%
	Female	23	57.5%
<i>Age</i>	Up to 25	15	37.5%
	26-27	10	25%
	Above 28	15	37.5%
<i>Program of study</i>	Chemistry	12	30%
	Balochi	15	37.5%
	English	13	32.5%

The responses come from a diverse group of students. Females (57.5%) are slightly more than males (42%). In terms of age, students are evenly spread, with most in the up to 25 and above 28 groups (37.5% each), while fewer are aged 26–27 (25%). Students from Balochi, English, and Chemistry programs participated almost equally. Overall, the data represents a balanced group, making the findings more reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results of the study

Table 2 Students' Response to Factor Research Usefulness

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A	SA
1	2.30	15.5	22.6	57.5	2.5
2	2.50	17.4	25.5	55.5	2.5
3	3.50	22.5	21.5	50.5	4.5
4	4.50	17.40	37.3	42.5	5.3
5	3.00	18.5	29.3	37.8	2.5

The table presents the answers to the statements concerning research usefulness given by the students. Overall, students have a positive but moderate perception of the benefits of research. In the question Research helps me understand academic topics more clearly, the majority of students responded in agreement (57.5%) with a low number of those who responded strongly (2.5%), meaning the student has a generally positive attitude. Regarding Conducting research as it enhances my critical thinking, the perception of 55.5% was positive but somewhat lesser. In the case of Research activities are useful in solving real-life problems, 50.5% agreed with 4.5 permanently agree, which is moderately a positive attitude. In the case of Research improves my information analysis skills, there was less agreement of 42.5% with the highest neutral response of 37.3% indicating a degree of uncertainty. Lastly, on the statement of Research is relevant to my personal and professional development, 37.8% concurred indicating the least positive perception of all the statements.

Table # 2: Percentages of Students' Responses to Factor Research Anxiety

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A	SA
1	5,00	22,50	42.50	30.00	12.50
2	4.40	27.00	20.00	47.50	5.00
3	2.50	30.00	27.00	37.50	3,50
4	3.00	25.00	15.00	52.00	5.00
5	2.07	23.00	17.00	45.00	10.00

Students were asked to respond to research anxiety and this is indicated in the table. On the whole, there is moderate anxiety when students are doing research. When asked whether one would feel anxious about conducting research, 30% of them agreed and 12.5% strongly agreed and many of them were in agreement with libraries being neutral. On experiencing stress due to research activities, 47.5% said yes indicating moderate stress. There was some hesitation as 37.5% agreed with difficulty in beginning research because of a fear that one would make an error. Concerns relevant to time related anxiety in 45% of students reported nervousness when presenting findings, with more time-relating to less expected time taking raising concerns in 52% of students.

Table # 3 Percentage of answers given by the students to Factor Positive Attitudes

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A	SA
1	6.00	12.00	20.00	35.00	27.00
2	4.40	25.00	17.00	47.50	7.00
3	2.5	17.50	25.00	50.50	5.00
4	3.50	20.00	25.00	45.00	10.00
5	4.00	22.00	12.50	47.50	14.00

The findings indicate that the students feel positively towards research. On the question of Research: helps me understand academic topics more clearly, the largest proportion of students indicated agreement or strongly agree with which they had a positive perception. In the case of Conducting research improves my critical thinking skills, the responses are largely positive with some being mixed. In the case of research activities are effective in solving real-life problems, people agreed with it with a majority of them pointing to it being an absolute yes. On the question of Research helps me to analyze the information produced, the majority responded in agreement whereas a certain number of students were neutral. In the case of Research is important to my academic and professional development the level of agreement is high with a strong view or positive perception. Research is generally viewed on a positive note with majority of the students agreeing on the importance of research, though some of them are neutral or disagree.

Table 4 Percentages of Students when asked about Factor Research Difficulties

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A	SA
1	2.00	10.00	17.50	62.00	8.50
2	3.50	16.50	15.00	55	10.00
3	4.50	15.50	22.00	50.00	7.50
4	2.00	5.00	20.00	68.00	5.00
5	3.50	5.00	12.50	67.00	9.00

The table presents the answers of students on statements of research troubles. On balance, students are aware of certain challenges in research but they do not consider them as key hindrances. In the case of feeling anxious about needing to carry out research, the majority of students reported an agreement (62%), which was moderately challenging with some strongly agreeing (8.5%). In the case of Research tasks make me feel stressed and overwhelmed, there

was a rather mixed perception of stress, the majority of 55 percent agreed, and 10 percent strongly agreed. In the response of I find it hard to begin research because I am afraid of mistakes, half responded with an agreement of 7.5% strongly agreed, which showed that there are students who have difficulties in starting research because of fear of making mistakes. In the case of I feel nervous when I present research findings, 68% of them respond in the affirmative and this indicates that students are aware of this challenge but still cope with it. In the case of Research assignments take more time than I expect, the percentage of those who agreed (67) with 9% strongly agreeing showed that students thought that time management is a challenge, although they usually have no problem with it.

All in all, learners have certain problems when it comes to research, yet, all these issues can be overcome and the majority of students believe they can cope with research assignments.

Table 5: Variable-wise Mean and Standard Deviation (n = 40)

Variable	Mean	SD
<i>Usefulness</i>	4.01	1.042
<i>Research Anxiety</i>	3.92	0.665
<i>Positive Attitudes</i>	3.53	0.612
<i>Research Difficulties</i>	3.68	0.180
Total	3.785	2.879

Findings reveal that students are generally positive about research with some differences in the responses. The research usefulness mean score is 4.01 (SD = 1.042) which means that students agree that research is useful, but the variability is quite low. The mean of research anxiety is 3.92 (SD = 0.665) with a moderate level of stress with all a little more variance among students. The attitudes towards research are positive, averaging to 3.53 (SD = 0.612) and 3.53 (SD = 0.612) respectively.

Broadly optimistic yet more varying reactions. Research challenges have the most mean of 3.68 (SD = 0.180), and they appear to have some research challenges, albeit with a moderate variation. On balance, the results demonstrate that students believe research to be useful and important, have positive attitudes, have moderate anxiety, and are aware of certain challenges, but they have a more positive attitude towards this kind of research than negative.

Model Summary of Variables and Students Research Attitudes

Analysis	Component	Statistic	Value
Model summary	Relationship Strength	R (Correlation)	.152
		R square	.23
ANOVA	Model Significance	F -statistic	.904
		Sig. (p-value)	0.00
Coefficient	Predictor sig	t-test	5.122
		Sig p-value	0.00
		B (Unstandardized)	.225
		Beta (Standardized)	.215

The model summary shows a relationship between Research variables and Students Research Attitudes (R = 0.152). The coefficient of determination indicates that only a small proportion of variance ($R^2 \approx 0.02-0.23$ as reported) in research attitudes is explained by the predictor.

The ANOVA results reveal that the model is not statistically significant, F = 0.904, p > 0.05. This indicates that the regression model does not significantly predict students' research attitudes.

Similarly, the coefficient results show that the predictor (Variables) has an insignificant effect on Students Research Attitudes ($t = 0.951$, $p = 0.348$; $\beta = 0.152$). Although the constant is significant ($B = 2.709$, $p < 0.001$), the independent variable does not contribute meaningfully to the model.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to investigate the attitudes of the students towards the research at the MPhil level when pursuing respective programs. The initial topic of research question concerned the attitudes of the students towards research studying in Public Sector University. The students had a neutral response as the mean score. The results indicated that usefulness is researched by students, and its importance in their future work is outlined. The outcomes coincide with the results of the research done by (Abulata et al., 2019; Bibi et al. 2012; Khan et al., 2023). Their research was aimed at examining the attitudes towards research. The results indicated that M.Phil. Students not only held negative perceptions but also positive perceptions towards research.. The simplest cause of this finding may be attributed to lack of a research environment in the public university since it is the simplest one. The graduate level has one introductory course of research.. They hardly prepare two or three chapters to do exams. A single course will not inculcate good ideas in students to carry out the research. They have challenges in various stages of research; they do not know concepts of research and designing research. The majority of students are stressed when they interpret research. The second research question was to establish how different the attitudes of students towards research vary with regards to gender. In results there was critical difference in attitude of the students in terms of gender. The attitude of male students towards the research is more positive. Similar conclusions of the researches are possible (Maqsood et al., 2019; Van Tran et al., 2023). Positive undergraduate research culture develops a positive mindset towards research among undergraduate students. The findings indicate that the majority of the students highly believed that research is beneficial to their careers and the like it. It further concludes that there are such students who are stressed and they have the research anxiety during their undergraduate level and that some students did not care about this response. The conclusion is that the students concur on the findings that research is interesting. The conclusion was that it was hard to determine when the students were requested to determine its applicability to their lives, and they gave an answer with a neutral response. The conclusion is that the students accepted that they have challenges using and learning various research steps. It is also concluded that there is significant difference amid male and female student's about their attitude towards research with male dominance.

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