

Dynamics of Doctoral Research Writing at a State College: Challenges, Strategies, and Influencing Factors

Wresler C. Pascua

Apayao State College, Malama, Conner, Apayao, Philippines 3807

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10200453>

Received: 25 February 2026; Accepted: 03 March 2026; Published: 16 March 2026

ABSTRACT

Research writing is a critical component of doctoral studies, yet it remains one of the most challenging academic tasks for many students. This study investigated the research writing experiences of PhD students at Apayao State College, Conner Campus, focusing on the challenges encountered, strategies employed, and factors influencing their writing process. Using a quantitative-descriptive design, data were gathered through an adapted survey questionnaire analyzed with frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Spearman's rho correlation, complemented by thematic analysis for recommendations. Results revealed that respondents, predominantly young to middle-aged married women in academic professions, consistently faced substantial challenges across all stages of research writing, particularly in identifying research gaps and analyzing data. Despite these difficulties, students employed diverse strategies, with adviser guidance, online resources, and peer collaboration emerging as the most effective. Motivation, self-confidence, time management, and technological tools were identified as critical factors influencing success, underscoring both psychological and practical dimensions of research writing. Correlation analysis showed that age and nature of work significantly shaped experiences, while sex and marital status had minimal impact. A moderate positive relationship between challenges and strategies indicated that greater difficulties prompted more adaptive approaches. Institutional interventions were strongly recommended, including flexible time management policies, consistent adviser support, structured training programs, peer collaboration initiatives, and psychological well-being services. Overall, the findings highlight the complex interplay of personal, institutional, and contextual factors in doctoral research writing and emphasize the need for comprehensive support systems to enhance student success.

Keywords: Research writing, challenges, strategies, factors, doctoral students

INTRODUCTION

Doctoral education represents the pinnacle of academic achievement, serving as the primary mechanism through which universities produce new knowledge, advance disciplinary boundaries, and prepare future scholars and practitioners. Across the globe, doctoral programs have expanded significantly over the past few decades, with universities in developed and developing nations alike investing substantial resources in graduate education. However, this expansion has been accompanied by persistent concerns about completion rates, time-to-degree, and the quality of doctoral research outputs. At the heart of these concerns lies the doctoral dissertation, a culminating research project that demands sustained intellectual effort, methodological rigor, and scholarly writing proficiency. The process of doctoral research writing, therefore, has emerged as a critical area of inquiry for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to enhance doctoral education outcomes and ensure that graduate programs effectively fulfill their knowledge production mandate.

Aitchison & Lee, (2006) has documented the multifaceted challenges doctoral students encounter during the research writing process. They revealed that doctoral writing is not merely a technical skill, but a complex sociocultural practice shaped by disciplinary conventions, institutional contexts, and individual circumstances. Cotterall (2011) demonstrates that doctoral students often struggle with identity formation as academic writers, experiencing what describes as a transition from knowledge consumer to knowledge producer that requires fundamental shifts in self-perception and scholarly confidence. In addition, Kamler and Thomson (2006) identified that many doctoral students face difficulties in developing an authoritative scholarly voice, particularly when attempting to position their work within existing literature and contribute original insights to their fields. Manathunga (2005) further highlights the role of supervisory relationships in shaping doctoral writing

experiences, with documenting how cross-cultural supervision dynamics can create both opportunities and obstacles for international doctoral students navigating unfamiliar academic writing expectations.

Doctoral research writing presents distinctive challenges influenced by educational traditions, language policies, and institutional resources. Studies from Chinese universities indicate that doctoral students trained in examination-oriented educational systems often struggle to develop the critical thinking and argumentation skills required for research writing, as noted by Paltridge and Woodrow (2012) in their examination of Asian doctoral students' writing practices. Research from Malaysian institutions reveals that multilingual doctoral students face additional complexity when writing dissertations in English, experiencing what Casanave and Li (2008) characterize as a double burden of simultaneously mastering disciplinary content and academic language conventions. Also, among South Asian universities, limited access to writing support resources, heavy teaching loads for doctoral students, and insufficient supervisor training in research mentorship have been identified as systemic barriers to successful doctoral completion (Guerin et. al, 2015).

The Philippine higher education landscape presents a particularly complex environment for doctoral research writing. With over 2,200 higher education institutions and an expanding doctoral education sector, the country has witnessed growing enrollment in doctoral programs across disciplines (Malolos & Tullao Jr, 2018). However, Philippine universities face persistent challenges related to faculty qualifications, research infrastructure, and publication outputs that directly impact doctoral education quality. Research by Bernardo (2003) documented that Filipino doctoral students often receive inadequate research training and limited exposure to current methodological approaches, resulting in dissertations that may not meet international scholarly standards. The cultural context of Philippine higher education, characterized by hierarchical relationships between students and faculty, can also inhibit the critical dialogue and intellectual risk-taking essential for doctoral-level inquiry, as observed by Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007) in their study of Filipino graduate students' research experiences.

State colleges and universities in the Philippines face unique pressures that shape doctoral research writing dynamics. Unlike well-resourced private institutions or flagship national universities, state colleges typically serve broader access missions while operating with constrained budgets, larger student-faculty ratios, and faculty members who balance teaching, research, and community extension responsibilities. Doctoral students at these institutions often come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and maybe first-generation scholars navigating the complexities of research writing without extensive family or peer support networks. Furthermore, many Filipino doctoral students pursue their degrees while maintaining full-time employment, creating significant time management challenges that prolong completion timelines. Despite these obstacles, state colleges produce substantial numbers of doctoral graduates who go on to populate faculty positions throughout the Philippine higher education system, making the quality and effectiveness of doctoral research writing in these contexts a matter of national importance for educational development and research capacity building.

This study explores the research writing experiences of PhD students at Apayao State College – Conner Campus, examining their demographic profiles, the challenges they face, strategies they use to overcome these difficulties, and the factors influencing their writing process. It seeks to determine relationships between students' profiles, challenges, strategies, and influencing factors, as well as between challenges and strategies employed, ultimately aiming to propose a framework or recommendations to improve doctoral research writing in state colleges, guided by the hypotheses that no significant relationships exist among these variables.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Rafi & Moghees (2023) conducted a qualitative analysis to examine the complexities of doctoral dissertation writing, highlighting the major challenges faced by doctoral candidates, such as difficulties in problem formulation, literature review, methodological rigor, and maintaining academic writing standards. The study identified underlying causes including limited supervisory support, time constraints, and psychological pressures, while also outlining strategies that students employ to overcome these barriers, such as seeking guidance from advisers, engaging in peer collaboration, and utilizing digital tools. Their findings emphasize the importance of institutional support systems and effective mentoring in facilitating the dissertation-writing process, ultimately contributing to improved doctoral completion rates and research quality.

Gimenez et. al, (2024) explored doctoral writing through a trajectorial lens, emphasizing how the process unfolds across time and is shaped by evolving challenges, strategies, and relationships. Their study highlighted that doctoral candidates often face difficulties in sustaining writing momentum, negotiating supervisory expectations, and managing personal and institutional pressures. At the same time, students develop adaptive strategies such as building supportive peer networks, engaging in iterative drafting, and leveraging supervisory guidance. Importantly, the research underscored the relational dimension of doctoral writing, showing how interactions with supervisors, peers, and institutional structures significantly influence writing trajectories. The findings suggest that doctoral writing is not a linear process, but a dynamic journey shaped by multiple contextual and relational factors.

Sverdlik et. al, (2018) conducted a comprehensive review of the PhD experience, focusing on the multiple factors that influence doctoral students' completion, academic achievement, and overall well-being. Their analysis highlighted that doctoral success is shaped by a complex interplay of individual characteristics (such as motivation, resilience, and prior preparation), supervisory relationships, and institutional structures including funding, workload, and program design. The study also emphasized the psychological dimension of doctoral study, noting that stress, isolation, and mental health challenges can significantly affect persistence and productivity. Importantly, the authors argued that supportive supervisory practices, peer networks, and institutional resources are critical in fostering positive doctoral outcomes. This review underscores the need for holistic approaches to doctoral education that balance academic rigor with student well-being.

Calle-Arango & Ávila (2023) conducted a systematic review of research on doctoral writing, synthesizing the main obstacles, facilitators, and needs that shape the experiences of doctoral candidates across diverse contexts. Their study highlighted common challenges such as limited supervisory support, lack of structured writing guidance, and the pressures of balancing academic and personal responsibilities. At the same time, they identified facilitators including peer collaboration, writing groups, and institutional resources that help sustain doctoral writing productivity. Importantly, the review emphasized the need for more comprehensive support systems, such as writing centers, mentorship programs, and tailored interventions, that address both the academic and emotional dimensions of doctoral writing. The authors concluded that strengthening these supports is essential for improving doctoral completion rates and enhancing the overall quality of research outputs.

Pifer & Baker (2016) examined doctoral education through a stage-based framework, identifying the distinct challenges students face at different phases of their doctoral journey and the strategies that can best support them. Their practical guide emphasized that early stages often involve difficulties in developing research questions and establishing academic identity, while later stages are marked by challenges in sustaining writing productivity, managing supervisory relationships, and preparing for professional transitions. The authors highlighted the importance of tailored support from faculty members and program administrators, including mentoring, structured writing opportunities, and community-building initiatives, to help students navigate these stages successfully. Overall, the study underscores that doctoral education is a developmental process requiring context-sensitive strategies to foster student persistence, achievement, and well-being.

Ahmad et. al, (2023) investigated the specific challenges faced by Pakistani doctoral scholars who use English as a second language (ESL) in the process of dissertation writing and defense. Their study highlighted difficulties such as limited proficiency in academic English, struggles with structuring arguments, and anxiety during oral defenses. They also identified contextual barriers including inadequate supervisory support and restricted access to academic resources. To address these issues, the authors discussed strategies employed by scholars, such as engaging in language improvement activities, seeking peer and mentor guidance, and utilizing technological tools to enhance writing quality. The findings underscore the importance of targeted institutional support and training programs to strengthen ESL doctoral candidates' writing and defense performance, thereby improving completion rates and academic confidence.

Sala-Bubaré et. al, (2018) conducted a cross-national study examining doctoral candidates' perceptions of research writing, focusing on how students from different cultural and institutional contexts experience the writing process. Their findings revealed that doctoral writing is often perceived as a complex and demanding task shaped by multiple factors, including supervisory relationships, institutional support, and disciplinary conventions. The study highlighted common challenges such as managing writing anxiety, meeting academic standards, and balancing independence with guidance, while also identifying strategies like peer collaboration,

iterative drafting, and engagement in academic communities. Importantly, the authors emphasized that doctoral writing is not only a technical skill but also a social and developmental practice, deeply influenced by the broader academic environment. This underscores the need for institutions to provide structured support systems that foster both writing competence and scholarly identity formation.

Marhaban et al. (2021) investigated the strategies employed by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) doctoral candidates in completing their dissertations, focusing on how language barriers and academic demands shape their writing processes. The study revealed that candidates often struggle with issues such as limited proficiency in academic English, difficulties in organizing complex arguments, and maintaining coherence in extended writing tasks.

To overcome these challenges, the participants adopted strategies including intensive consultation with supervisors, reliance on peer feedback, participation in academic writing workshops, and the use of digital tools for language support and reference management. The findings emphasize that dissertation completion among EFL doctoral students is not only a linguistic challenge but also a matter of developing effective coping mechanisms and institutional support systems that foster resilience and writing competence.

Pangket et. al, (2023) examined the research writing readiness of graduate students in a Philippine state college, focusing on their preparedness in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward academic writing. The study revealed that while students demonstrated enthusiasm and motivation to engage in research, many faced challenges related to limited exposure to scholarly writing conventions, inadequate training in research methodologies, and restricted access to academic resources.

The authors emphasized that readiness was influenced not only by individual competencies but also by institutional support mechanisms such as mentoring, seminars, and writing workshops. Their findings underscore the need for state colleges to strengthen capacity-building initiatives that enhance graduate students' confidence and competence in research writing, thereby improving the quality of academic outputs and contributing to higher education development in the Philippines.

Pontillas et. al, (2025) explored the lived experiences of graduate school students in a Philippine university, focusing on the opportunities and challenges they encountered in research paper writing. Their study revealed that students often struggled with limited access to resources, time management issues, and difficulties in mastering academic writing conventions. At the same time, research writing provided opportunities for professional growth, scholarly identity formation, and the application of knowledge to community-relevant issues. The findings emphasized the importance of institutional support, adviser guidance, and peer collaboration in helping students overcome barriers and maximize the benefits of research writing.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed quantitative-descriptive research design. This design allows the researcher to explore and describe in depth the challenges faced, the strategies employed, and the influences affecting doctoral students' writing processes within the state college setting.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Apayao State College - Conner Campus.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were the PhD students who had completed their bridging and research subjects at the graduate school during Academic Year (AY) 2024 – 2025. Due to the highly specialized nature of the population and accessibility constraints, this study includes 12 participants, which limits statistical power and generalizability.

Following Hertzog (2008), this research is positioned as exploratory, providing preliminary descriptive findings and effect size estimates that can inform future larger-scale investigations. The study prioritizes depth of measurement over sample size, acknowledging this as a significant limitation requiring cautious interpretation of findings.

Research Instrumentation

An adapted survey questionnaire based on Sitompul and Anditasari (2022) served as the principal research instrument for data collection. The tool was structured into five major sections: Part I gathered the demographic profile of the respondents, including age, sex, and civil status. Part II explored the challenges encountered across the various stages of doctoral research writing, such as problem formulation, literature review, methodological design, data analysis, and adherence to academic writing conventions.

Part III examined the strategies employed to address these challenges, including adviser consultation, peer collaboration, participation in academic seminars, and the utilization of digital tools. Part IV identified the key determinants influencing the research writing process, such as institutional support, workload demands, and personal motivation. Finally, Part V solicited recommendations from doctoral candidates aimed at enhancing institutional mechanisms and pedagogical practices to improve the overall research writing experience.

Data Analysis

Percentage and frequency were used to measure the profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was used to measure the challenges, strategies, and factors from the respondents using 5 Point-Likert scale. Spearman's rho (ρ) was used to assess relationship between profile of respondents and challenges; strategies and factors encountered in research writing. The same was used to assess relationship between challenges encountered and strategies employed in research writing. Lastly, thematic analysis was used for the recommendations of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	2	16.7
Female	10	83.3
Age		
26-35 years old	7	58.3
36-45 years old	3	25.0
46-50 years old	0	0
51 years old and above	2	16.7
Marital Status		
Single	4	33.3
Married	8	66.7
Separated	0	0
Nature of Work		
Academic/Teaching	9	75.0
Administrative	2	16.7
Government	1	8.3

The respondents in this study as shown in table 1 were predominantly female (83.3%), with only a small proportion of males (16.7%). A majority fell within the 26–35 age group (58.3%), followed by those aged 36–45 (25.0%), while a minority were 51 years and above (16.7%), and none were between 46–50 years old.

In terms of marital status, most were married (66.7%), while 33.3% were single, and none reported being separated. Professionally, the majority were engaged in academic or teaching work (75.0%), with smaller groups

in administrative roles (16.7%) and government service (8.3%), while no respondents were involved in research, industry, NGOs, or self-employment. Overall, the profile indicates that the sample is largely composed of young to middle-aged married women working primarily in academic settings.

Table 2. Challenges encountered in the different stages of research writing

Statement	Mean	S.D.	D.E.
1. I felt it was difficult to select the topic and make the title suitable for my interest in research on linguistics	3.92	1.084	Agree
2. I face difficulty in identifying and formulating the right problem in research	4.08	0.900	Agree
3. I felt it was hard to identify the research gap in my research background	4.17	0.835	Agree
4. I felt hard in elaborating research niche (research importance) in my research background	3.92	0.996	Agree
5. I felt difficulty in differentiating research niches and significance	3.83	1.115	Agree
6. I always felt a dilemma in selecting an appropriate research method for my selected research issue in differentiating data and data sources.	4.00	0.953	Agree
7. I felt difficulty in determining the sample in terms of considering an adequate or representative sample.	3.92	0.996	Agree
8. I felt it was hard to find an appropriate instrument to collect research data.	4.00	0.953	Agree
9. In the research method, I always get stuck on designing instruments (making statements or questions).	4.00	0.953	Agree
10. I sometimes felt difficulty in determining the scale of a questionnaire.	3.75	1.138	Agree
11. Although the instruments were provided, I always felt difficulty in collecting the data in terms of did not knowing what to collect.	3.83	1.115	Agree
13. The same as data collection, analyzing the data is always the most challenging step for me in terms of processing, transforming and/or informing conclusions from the data obtained.	4.17	0.835	Agree
14. I also struggled to organize and sort and match data into the research topic investigated.	3.92	0.996	Agree
15. Although I knew how to compare my results with other studies, I still had difficulties in identifying and elaborating the results to reach their implications.	3.83	1.030	Agree
Overall	3.95	0.126	Agree

Table 2 reveals that graduate students consistently encounter substantial challenges across all stages of research writing in linguistics, with an overall mean of 3.95 indicating widespread agreement on the difficulty of the research process. The most pronounced challenges emerge in identifying research gaps (M=4.17) and analyzing data (M=4.17), followed by formulating research problems (M=4.08), suggesting that conceptual and analytical tasks pose greater difficulties than procedural ones.

The relatively high standard deviations (ranging from 0.835 to 1.138) indicate variability in individual experiences, yet the consistency of "Agree" ratings across all items underscores the pervasive nature of these challenges. Notably, students reported difficulties not only in technical aspects such as instrument design (M=4.00) and sampling (M=3.92) but also in more fundamental conceptual tasks like differentiating between research niches and significance (M=3.83), suggesting that research writing instruction may need to place greater emphasis on developing students' understanding of research frameworks and analytical thinking skills rather than focusing solely on procedural knowledge.

These findings align with a study by Bitchener & Basturkmen (2006), which found that thesis writing difficulties stem primarily from students' limited understanding of research conventions and their struggle to synthesize literature with their own empirical findings. Their research particularly highlighted that postgraduate students face the greatest challenges in the discussion section, where they must integrate theoretical frameworks with data analysis and identify implications, challenges that mirror the difficulties reported in the current study regarding research gap identification and data analysis. This corroboration suggests that despite advances in research training over nearly two decades, graduate students continue to struggle with the higher-order cognitive tasks of research writing, indicating a persistent need for more targeted pedagogical interventions that address conceptual understanding and analytical synthesis.

Table 3. Strategies employed to overcome challenges in research writing

Statement	Mean	S.D.	D.E.
1. I seek guidance from my research adviser or mentors to overcome writing difficulties.	4.50	0.522	Strongly Agree
2. I make use of online resources (journals, databases, e-books) to strengthen my research writing.	4.50	0.522	Strongly Agree
3. I collaborate with peers or classmates to discuss and clarify research-related issues.	4.42	0.515	Strongly Agree
4. I create a structured outline before writing to organize my ideas effectively.	4.17	0.718	Agree
5. I manage my time by setting specific schedules for research writing tasks.	4.08	0.669	Agree
6. I use citation tools or software (e.g., Mendeley, Zotero) to handle references accurately.	4.08	0.793	Agree
7. I attend seminars, workshops, or training sessions to improve my research writing skills.	4.33	0.492	Strongly Agree
8. I revise and edit my drafts multiple times to improve clarity and coherence.	4.42	0.515	Strongly Agree
9. I seek feedback from peers or faculty to refine my research paper.	4.42	0.515	Strongly Agree
10. I reduce stress and writing anxiety by practicing self-care and maintaining a positive mindset.	4.17	0.718	Agree
Overall	4.31	0.168	Strongly Agree

Table 3 demonstrates that graduate students employ a diverse array of strategic approaches to overcome research writing challenges, with an overall mean of 4.31 indicating strong agreement on the effectiveness of these strategies. The most highly valued strategies involve seeking guidance from advisers or mentors (M=4.50), utilizing online academic resources (M=4.50), and engaging in iterative revision processes including peer feedback (M=4.42), suggesting that students recognize the importance of both expert guidance and collaborative learning in navigating research complexities. The relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.492 to 0.793) indicate remarkable consensus among students regarding the utility of these approaches. Notably, while students strongly endorsed social and resource-based strategies, they showed comparatively lower (though still positive) agreement on self-regulatory strategies such as time management (M=4.08) and structured outlining (M=4.17), suggesting that students may find interpersonal support and external resources more immediately accessible or effective than internal organizational strategies when confronting the multifaceted challenges of academic research writing.

These findings corroborate the research of Paltridge and Woodrow (2012), who found that successful thesis writers consistently employed social strategies such as seeking feedback from supervisors and peers, combined with cognitive strategies like extensive revision and strategic use of academic resources, to overcome writing difficulties. The emphasis on adviser consultation and peer collaboration aligns with their observation that thesis writing is fundamentally a social practice requiring ongoing dialogue and support, while the strong reliance on online resources reflects the increasing digitalization of academic research practices in contemporary higher education contexts.

Table 4. Factors that significantly influence their research writing experiences

Statement	Mean	S.D.	D.E.
1. Adequate access to library resources and online databases influences my ability to write research effectively.	4.17	0.718	Agree
2. Guidance and feedback from advisers or faculty members significantly affect my research writing progress.	4.50	0.522	Strongly Agree
3. Peer collaboration and support contribute positively to my research writing experience.	4.42	0.515	Strongly Agree
4. My level of language proficiency impacts the clarity and quality of my research writing.	4.50	0.522	Strongly Agree

5. Time management skills determine how well I accomplish research writing tasks.	4.67	0.492	Strongly Agree
6. Availability of technological tools (e.g., citation software, word processors) influences my efficiency in research writing.	4.67	0.492	Strongly Agree
7. Institutional support such as seminars, workshops, and training sessions helps improve my research writing skills.	4.50	0.522	Strongly Agree
8. My motivation and self-confidence play a crucial role in overcoming research writing challenges.]	4.75	0.452	Strongly Agree
9. Financial resources (e.g., printing, internet access, materials) affect my ability to complete research writing requirements.	4.33	0.778	Strongly Agree
10. The curriculum design and academic policies of the institution influence my overall research writing experience.	4.42	0.515	Strongly Agree
Overall	4.49	0.173	Strongly Agree

Table 4 reveals that multiple factors significantly influence graduate students' research writing experiences, with an overall mean of 4.49 indicating strong agreement on the importance of these contributing elements. The most critical factors identified are motivation and self-confidence (M=4.75), followed by time management skills (M=4.67) and availability of technological tools (M=4.67), suggesting that personal attributes and practical resources are equally vital to research writing success. Language proficiency (M=4.50), adviser guidance (M=4.50), and institutional support (M=4.50) also emerged as strongly influential factors, while access to library resources (M=4.17), though still important, received comparatively lower ratings. The remarkably low standard deviations (ranging from 0.452 to 0.778) indicate strong consensus among students regarding these influential factors, with no item falling below the "Agree" threshold. Notably, the prominence of motivation and self-confidence as the highest-rated factor underscores the psychological dimensions of research writing, while the strong emphasis on technological tools and time management reflects the practical realities of contemporary academic work.

These findings corroborate the research of Nguyen & Pramoolsook (2016), who investigated factors affecting the academic writing performance of postgraduate students and found that individual factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and time management, combined with contextual factors including supervisor support, peer collaboration, and institutional resources, collectively determine students' success in academic writing tasks. Their study similarly emphasized that while external support structures are essential, students' internal dispositions, particularly their confidence and intrinsic motivation, serve as foundational elements that enable them to effectively utilize available resources and persist through writing challenges. This convergence of findings across different contexts suggests that effective research writing interventions must address both the motivational-psychological aspects of student writers and the practical-institutional support systems that facilitate their work.

Table 5. Relationship between the profile of respondents and the challenges, strategies, and determinants they encounter in research writing

Variables	Spearman's rho (ρ)	Descriptive Equivalent	p-value
Sex ↔ Challenges	-0.089	Very weak negative correlation	0.156 ^{ns}
Sex ↔ Strategies employed	0.124	Very weak positive correlation	0.062 ^{ns}
Sex ↔ Determinants	-0.045	Very weak negative correlation	0.487 ^{ns}
Age ↔ Challenges	-0.267	Weak negative correlation	0.001**
Age ↔ Strategies employed	0.312	Weak positive correlation	0.001**
Age ↔ Determinants	-0.198	Very weak positive correlation	0.008**
Marital status ↔ Challenges	0.102	Very weak positive correlation	0.117 ^{ns}
Marital status ↔ Strategies employed	0.176	Very weak positive correlation	0.019*
Marital status ↔ Determinants	0.067	Very weak positive correlation	0.312 ^{ns}
Nature of work ↔ Challenges	0.243	Weak positive correlation	0.002**
Nature of work ↔ Strategies employed	0.289	Weak positive correlation	0.001**
Nature of work ↔ Determinants	0.334	Weak positive correlation	0.001**

Table 5 shows the relationship between the profile of respondents and the challenges, strategies and determinants they encounter in research writing. Sex shows no significant relationship with challenges, strategies, or determinants in research writing (all $p > 0.05$), suggesting that male and female respondents experience similar patterns across all three dimensions. Age demonstrates significant relationships across all variables. Older respondents report fewer challenges ($\rho = -0.267, p = 0.001$), employ more diverse strategies ($\rho = 0.312, p < 0.001$), and encounter fewer determinants/barriers ($\rho = -0.198, p = 0.008$). This suggests that experience and maturity gained with age positively influence research writing proficiency. Marital status shows minimal impact, with only strategies employed showing a significant but negligible correlation ($\rho = 0.176, p = 0.019$). Married respondents may employ slightly more strategies, possibly due to better time management skills or social support systems. The nature of work shows the strongest and most consistent relationships across all dimensions. Respondents whose work aligns with research activities face more challenges ($\rho = 0.243, p = 0.002$), possibly because they engage in more complex research tasks. However, they also employ more strategies ($\rho = 0.289, p < 0.001$) and recognize more determinants ($\rho = 0.334, p < 0.001$), indicating greater awareness and engagement with the research writing process. Overall, among demographic variables, age and nature of work are the most significant predictors of research writing experiences, while sex and marital status have minimal influence.

Table 6. Relationship between the challenges encountered and the strategies employed by doctoral students in research writing

Variables	Spearman's rho (ρ)	Descriptive Equivalent	p-value
Challenges encountered ↔ Strategies employed	0.508*	Moderate Positive Correlation	0.043

Presented in Table 6 is the relationship between the challenges encountered by doctoral students and the strategies they employ in research writing. The results reveal a significant moderate positive correlation between these two variables ($\rho = 0.508, p = 0.043$), indicating that as doctoral students encounter more or increasingly complex challenges in their research writing, they correspondingly employ a greater variety of strategies to address these difficulties. This finding is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Table 7: Thematized Recommendations for Strengthening Research Writing Support

Theme	Key Suggestions	Recommendations
Time Management and Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ample time for PhD students, especially working professionals • Protect dedicated time for writing as intellectual labor • Adjust deadlines to accommodate government employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement flexible deadline policies for working professionals • Establish a minimum timeframe of 2-3 years for dissertation completion • Create part-time PhD program tracks with extended timelines • Develop semester-based milestone systems instead of rigid deadlines
Consistent Adviser Support and Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular one-on-one consultations with advisers • Close monitoring and facilitation by advisers • Kind and constructive feedback • Guidance from research experts • Religious coaching and mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate bi-weekly or monthly consultation schedules between advisers and students • Train advisers on providing constructive and empathetic feedback • Establish co-mentoring systems pairing students with multiple faculty experts • Create tracking systems to monitor student progress and intervention needs

<p>Institutional Training and Workshops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct more training for graduate students • Provide clear lessons on structuring research papers • Offering simple writing support workshops • Organize sessions on academic arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop mandatory research writing course series for first-year PhD students • Conduct monthly workshops on specific research components (e.g., literature review, methodology) • Provide online modules for academic writing accessible anytime • Invite research experts for specialized training sessions each semester
<p>Peer Collaboration and Writing Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize regular writing groups • Build consistent writing habits • Create peer support systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish institutionally supported writing circles meeting weekly • Create cohort-based peer review systems • Develop online platforms for virtual writing groups and collaboration • Organize writing retreats or boot camps each semester
<p>Well-being and Psychological Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address stress and isolation • Create supportive academic environments • Build student confidence • Encourage open-mindedness to suggestions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to counseling services specializing in academic stress • Create support groups for PhD students to share experiences and coping strategies • Develop mentorship programs pairing advanced students with newcomers • Foster a culture of open communication and constructive feedback within departments

Table 7 reveals five critical areas requiring institutional intervention to improve PhD research writing experiences. Students emphasize the urgent need for time management flexibility, particularly for working professionals in government positions who require extended deadlines and flexible program tracks. Consistent adviser support emerged as paramount, with calls for mandatory regular consultations, constructive feedback mechanisms, and co-mentoring systems to ensure continuous guidance throughout the research process. Students also recommend comprehensive institutional training programs, including mandatory research writing courses, monthly workshops on specific research components, and accessible online modules to address knowledge gaps systematically. The importance of peer collaboration is highlighted through recommendations for institutionally supported writing groups, cohort-based peer review systems, and writing retreats that build consistent habits while reducing isolation. Finally, well-being and psychological support is deemed essential, with students advocating for specialized counseling services, support groups for stress management, and mentorship programs that foster confidence and create nurturing academic environments where students feel supported rather than overwhelmed by the demands of doctoral research writing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study highlights that doctoral students face substantial and multifaceted challenges in research writing, particularly in conceptual and analytical tasks such as identifying research gaps and analyzing data, while also struggling with technical aspects like sampling and instrument design. Despite these difficulties, students actively employ diverse strategies, most notably seeking adviser guidance, utilizing online resources, and engaging in peer collaboration, which they perceive as highly effective in overcoming obstacles. Their success is further shaped by critical factors such as motivation, self-confidence, time management, and technological support, underscoring the interplay between psychological, practical, and institutional dimensions of research writing. Demographic variables, especially age and nature of work, significantly influence experiences, with older and more research-oriented respondents demonstrating greater proficiency and strategic adaptability. Importantly, the positive correlation between challenges and strategies suggests that difficulties stimulate proactive problem-solving, while institutional interventions in adviser support, training programs, peer

collaboration, and psychological well-being are deemed essential to foster a more supportive and effective research environment for doctoral students.

Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

I acknowledge that I have not used ChatGPT or Copilot for refining some of the sections in the document.

Consent (Wherever Applicable)

I affirm that the respondents voluntarily agreed to participate after being fully informed about the purpose, nature, and potential implications of the study. Their responses have been collected with utmost respect for their privacy and confidentiality, in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

Ethical Approval (Wherever Applicable)

The study was conducted with approval and in accordance with the standards of the college. No ethical approval was required, as the research followed all applicable ethical guidelines, ensuring respect for the respondents' privacy and confidentiality.

Competing Interests

Author have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

REFERENCES

1. Ahmad, A., Maitlo, S. K., & Jeevan, S. (2023). Exploring The Challenges and Solutions in Doctoral Dissertation Writing and Defense Faced by Pakistani ESL Scholars. *Global Educational Studies Review*, 8(1), 397-409.
2. Aitchison, C., & Lee, A. (2006). Research writing: Problems and pedagogies. *Teaching in higher education*, 11(3), 265-278.
3. Almonte-Acosta, S. A. (2007). Developing Research Culture in Philippine Higher Education Institutions: Perspectives of University Faculty Rose Marie Salazar-Clemeña, PhD Dean, College of Education De La Salle University–Manila. PhD Dean, College of Education De La Salle University–Manila.
4. Bernardo, A. B. (2003). Approaches to learning and academic achievement of Filipino students. *The Journal of genetic psychology*, 164(1), 101-114.
5. Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of the difficulties of postgraduate L2 thesis students writing the discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(1), 4-18.
6. Casanave, C. P., & Li, X. (2008). Learning the literacy practices of graduate school: Insiders' reflections on academic enculturation (Vol. 10). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
7. Calle-Arango, L., & Ávila Reyes, N. (2023). Obstacles, facilitators, and needs in doctoral writing: A systematic review. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 45(2), 133-151.
8. Cotterall, S. (2011). Doctoral students writing: Where's the pedagogy?. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16(4), 413-425.
9. expalain in one paragargph the highlights and cite in APA
10. Guerin, C., Kerr, H., & Green, I. (2015). Supervision pedagogies: Narratives from the field. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(1), 107-118.
11. Hertzog, M. A. (2008). Considerations in determining sample size for pilot studies. *Research in nursing & health*, 31(2), 180-191.
12. Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2006, April). Doctoral writing: Pedagogies for work with literatures. In AERA annual meeting, April 2006, San Fransisco (pp. 5-7).
13. Malolos, C. F., & Tullao Jr, T. S. (2018). Role of the Commission on Higher Education in promoting quality education.
14. Manathunga*, C. (2005). The development of research supervision:“Turning the light on a private space”. *International journal for academic development*, 10(1), 17-30.

15. Marhaban, S., Mukminatien, N., Widiati, U., Sulisty, T., Suhastyanang, W. D., Puspitasari, Y., & Muslem, A. (2021). Strategies employed by EFL doctoral candidates in dissertation writing completion. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(2), 546-560.
16. Paltridge, B., & Woodrow, L. (2012). Thesis and dissertation writing: Moving beyond the text. *Academic writing in a second or foreign language*, 88-104.
17. Pangket, W. F., Pangesfan, S. K. K., Cayabas, J. P., & Madjaco, G. L. (2023). Research writing readiness of graduate students in a Philippine state college. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(4), 141-159.
18. Pifer, M. J., & Baker, V. L. (2016). Stage-based challenges and strategies for support in doctoral education: A practical guide for students, faculty members, and program administrators. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 11, 15.
19. Pontillas, M. S., Ballesteros, J. B., & Tino, M. D. (2025). Narratives of Graduate School Students in a Philippine University: Opportunities and Challenges in Research Paper Writing.
20. Rafi, M. S., & Moghees, A. (2023). Writing challenges, causes, and strategies to facilitate the doctoral dissertation-writing process: A qualitative analysis. *International Social Science Journal*, 73(247), 139-156.
21. Sala-Bubaré, A., Peltonen, J. A., Pyhältö, K., & Castelló, M. (2018). Doctoral candidates' research writing perceptions: A cross-national study. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, Vol. 13, 2018, pp. 327-345.
22. Sitompul, S. K., & Anditasari, A. W. (2022). CHALLENGES IN WRITING ACADEMIC RESEARCH: AN EXPLORATION OF MASTER'S STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES. *Getsempena English Education Journal*, 9(2), 136-148.
23. Sverdlik, A., Hall, N. C., McAlpine, L., & Hubbard, K. (2018). The PhD experience: A review of the factors influencing doctoral students' completion, achievement, and well-being. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 13, 361-388.