

Persistence in the Ivory Tower: The Triumph D.Phil. Experience of Algerian English Students

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Abstract:

The present paper aimed to disclose the facilitative factors that were conducive of Algerian doctoral students' academic persistence and eventual obtention of the D.Phil. degree. Our subjects were previously doctoral candidates who applied and were granted their PhD. degrees at Algerian universities; they were all affiliated with English departments at different university institutions. Data needed in our undertaking was gathered by virtue of a semi-structured, virtually administered questionnaire. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the now doctors managed to eradicate all manner of available as well as potential attrition motives due overwhelmingly to 1) their constant, inwardly generated motivation, 02) their supervisors' laudable contributions, 03) their insistence upon judiciously setting up deadlines at every novel juncture, 04) their aspirations for getting a job/better job and 05) besieging themselves with like-minded peers off-line and via online communities.

Keywords: Algerian; Persistence; D.Phil.; Attrition; Supervisors

I. Introduction

Procuring admission into doctoral programmes is indubitably one of the hardest academic nuts to crack. This is primarily ascribable to the tough selection criteria that most departments set up for admission. Another trapping of doctoral programmes pertains, hardly surprisingly, to the dropout rates per se. As many as 40 percent of PhD programmes enrollers fall short of bringing their research enterprises into fruition (Golde, 2005). Having made constant observations ever since I was a doctoral candidate myself from 2012 to 2018, I noticed that in the English department where I had been enrolled over 60 percent of the students either had dropout intentions or decided to officially leave the programme, usually through not renewing their departmental registrations for one or two years consecutively. This alarming state of affairs had made me embark on delving into this issue and exploring it more thoroughly and closely through scholars' own lenses. This has unearthed, amongst other things, that the problem can by no means be viewed as a local one, as in many countries, even the developed ones, attrition rates can be as high as 50 % in North America (Guay and Litalien, 2015). This and a range of other analogous studies have spawned my interest to conduct the current research work. I aimed to get to the roots of what empowered completers to bring total success into their adventures. I posit that doing research on completers' traits would not be less rewarding and less enriching to doing research on what rendered non-completers incapable of finishing the mission with success. Our contribution into the wider field of research would fundamentally reside in furnishing a local account on the traits of doctoral Algerian students, who were previously enrolled at PhD programmes in Algeria and whose area of specialisation is English.

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II. Theoretical Background of the Study

1. Doctoral Dropout Rates and their Myriad Repercussions

Although admission into doctoral programmes up and won the globe, upon the whole, is typically subjective to highly selective criteria and usually only the most academically geared-up manage to cross the admission gate, attrition rates are frightening high (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008; Ampaw & Jaeger, 2011). Education at the doctoral level per se bestows a constellation of benefits upon individuals and societies at large. It expands the professional mobility horizons for doctorate holders and it makes them far more likely to gain access to better employment opportunities, work under better working conditions, and have higher incomes than their non-holder counterparts. Similarly, the wider society benefits from such education programmes as these will eventually lead to making the society a more organized, more productive and they will ultimately contribute significantly to overall economic prosperity (Auriol, 2010; Wendler et al. 2012).

Student-made termination of their doctoral affiliations does not engender undesirably bad outcomes for the students only. Non-completers are, to frame it differently, just a part of a whole chain of individuals who will have to put up with the many and varied damages, so to speak, non-retention will usually bring about. Doctoral dropouts will by so doing potentially cut woefully down upon the range of job opportunities that owning a D.Phil. is prone to bestow upon them. Leaving a doctoral programme prematurely may, likewise, trigger off the experience of low self-esteem as these students may with time view themselves as losers since they failed to triumphantly handle the various strains, stresses and demands of doctoral affiliation (Levecque, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, Van der Heyden, & Gisle, 2017; Lovitts, 2001). Advisors are, by the same token, likely to suffer the negative impacts that non-completion engenders (Devos, Boudrenghien, Van der Linden, Azzi, et al., 2016). For universities and faculties, attrition will result in reduction in resources and will prove costly for faculty members as they will uselessly have invested time in unfinished research undertakings (Smallwood, 2004). Even societies as such will be adversely impacted by these unaccomplished academic projects as attrition will lead to lowering the societal productivity and competitiveness (Wendler, et al., 2010).

2. Major Factors of Doctoral Attrition

Several empirical studies seem to have reached roughly identical inferences with regard to the big impact relationships and interactions with peers and other faculty members might have on students' resilience and dropping out intentions and eventual departures from doctoral programmes (Baker and Lattuca, 2010). For Bair and Hawoth (2005), the routine interactions of PhD students with members of the academic community have a much more significantly noticeable impacts on hindering or accelerating progress than the actual nature of the research methodology, qualitative or otherwise, adopted. Of all the existing faculty members whose contributions have been most extensively investigated and whose role has been most closely scrutinized is the supervisor. On the potential effect of the relationship holding between doctoral candidates and their supervisors, Lovitts (2001) penned, 'is probably the single most critical factor in determining who stays and who leaves' (p.270).

Golde (2005) addressed this issue from a different perspective as she attempted to bring to the light of day how both departmental and discipline cultural practices are bound to influence students' decision to persist or drop out. Her population of interest was narrowed down to solely non-completers. To get a cross-departmental investigation, which she predicted would furnish a more reliable picture, she selected four different departments from the same university institution. About her choice of the

same, as opposed to different universities, she argued that ‘By holding the institution constant, I was able to cast a focused spotlight on those aspects of each department that were either unique to it or connected to the norms of its home discipline.’ (p. 672) By unifying the study site, the researcher wanted to get a better centralized investigation which is more prone than a non-centralized one especially for short-term studies like hers, which aspire to bring to the fore comparative accounts of local departments belonging to the same institution. The four departments whose attrited students Golde (2005) interviewed are the departments of Biology, Geology, English and History.

In the science department, much of the attrition could be immediately ascribable to the lack of trust as well as unhealthy supervisory relationships. She comments that this state of affairs is by no means counterintuitive nor surprising since in the geology and biology departments, the students’ progress is inextricably linked to the constant support of the advisor, whether this support pertains to the research project as such, sponsorship opportunities and, no less crucially, paper publishing. One of her respondents, a geology student, spelt out the reasons that compelled her to abandon the first doctoral programme where she enrolled and transfer to another programme at another university

It was the relationship with my advisor that forced me, not just to leave my project with her, but to leave Midwestern. I needed to get away from the influence that she was having on my self-esteem... Mostly the reason I left Midwestern was because I felt my self-confidence eroding at every second, and I knew that if I did not leave there I would drop out of graduate school and never go back. (p. 687)

The extremely sensitive issue of the by no means peripheral role advisors play in shaping up the research experience is further revealed by virtue of what might ensue if the relationship were to fail to work as decently as need be. From the interviews she conducted, amongst the key findings is that some students who chose to switch supervisors but stay in the same university turned out to have made the worst decision that there is as their initial supervisor, who frowned upon this switching decision, were able to interfere into their academic career and even exert unfavourable influence on their own lives afterwards. Because of these alarming scenarios, some students choose to err on the side of caution and ultimately opt for transferring to other university institutions where they would be more likely to make better grounded, better informed, safer decisions as to how to go about choosing their academic advisors.

As regards how attrition, which has its roots in the supervisor-supervisee mismatch, could be confronted the interviews findings disclosed that students should know upfront as much details available about their potential supervisor’s research area, their supervisory practices and so forth as possible. Previous research undertakings have arrived at confirmatory inferences on this front (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Golde & Dore, 2001).

3. Factors Conducive of Doctoral Success

Gender has been reported to have remarkable bearings upon doctoral completion rates, with men being more likely to complete their PhD than women (Groenvynck, Vandevelde, & Van Rossem, 2013; Van Ours & Ridder, 2003; Visser, Luwel, & Moed, 2007). Not all authors unanimously agree on this: some other researchers have noticed no quantifiably important linkage between gender and completion rates (Van der Haert, Arias Ortiz, Emplit, Halloin, & Dehon; Spronken-Smith, Cameron, & Quigg, 2018).

Nationality is another factor which has been said to have immediate impacts on completion rates. In countries, like the U.S. and in Europe, non-citizens have had higher

rates of completion than their resident counterparts Groenvynck et al., 2013; Wright & Cochrane, 2000).

Another factor which has been associated with doctoral success and failure is arguably age. Groenvynck et al. (2013) and Spronken-Smith, et al. (2018) concur that students who get admitted into doctoral programmes at a younger age (20-26) stand comparatively higher chances of successfully completing their programmes, whilst those admitted from 27-72 may have dropping out intentions or may end up leaving the programme prematurely altogether.

Funding is rated amongst the strongest determinants of completion at the doctoral phase. The nature of the fund students benefit from has noticeably varying effects on their persistence rates, namely students who are funded through fellowships are better privileged than those earning merely an assistantship. The students who fund their own research projects seem to stand the lowest chances of completing their studies (Ehrenberg & Mavros, 1995; Groenvynck et al., 2013).

Seagram, Gould, and Pyke (1998) and Wright and Cochrane (2000) contend that one of the most robust determiners of success is the discipline per se. According to the findings of their research undertakings, dropout rates in the social and human sciences as well as in arts are much higher than those in natural and applied and medical sciences.

III. The Present Study

1. Aims and Question of the Study

The overriding aim of the current study has been to contribute to a more research-informed understanding by the Algerian academic community of the various different issues surrounding the all-too-crucial recurrent theme of doctoral persistence. I understand that many studies in the human and social studies arenas are mostly kindled by purely prolonged personal experiences and continued focussed, informal long-term observations of a certain intriguing recurring phenomenon. This study constitutes no exception. It is fundamentally thanks to my experience as a doctoral candidate and my observation of how students enrolled in these graduate programmes in Algeria cope with the virtually endless constantly cropping up demands along the long and hugely demanding journey that our research started to have a meaning shape. Amongst our most important observations which led to the emergence of this undertaking was the fact that virtually half of each new cohort of students drop out, either through formal declarations or via not renewing their annual registration for two to three years in a row. My study has been conducted, however, to get to the bottom of the various traits that completers own and which empowered them to stay resilient till they eventually defended their D. Phil. theses. My study has been conducted to answer this research question:

What are the most fundamental factors which collectively contributors to keeping students persistent throughout the various phases of the doctoral journey?

2. Population

As has been mentioned above, the population of our study was 39 doctorate holders, belonging to five different university institutions. All these candidates PhD theses are retrievable online from the electronic repositories of the universities of affiliation. The respondents earned their Ph.D. degrees comparatively recently, from 2016-2019. We targeted this category as such under the assumption that they still hold fresh ideas about the wide range of features of the academic experience. Another selection criterion was age in the sense that all the participating doctors are young, with the age range being 27-38. A third criterion that members of our population of choice needed to meet for inclusion in our study relates to the PhD programme that they enrolled in. More specifically, we targeted solely graduates who were admitted into the

LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorate) doctorate programme. No member of the old system enrollers was chosen; we did aim to have a wholly homogeneous population in order that all potential intervening variables, bearing on the programme as such, would be eradicated. As data was collected during the first three months of the 2021-2022 academic year, during which span the Omicron variant started to exponentially spread across the globe, the questionnaire was administered and completed virtually thanks to Google Form services. A fourth guiding parameters in accordance with which our population of interest was selected was the doctoral programme admission academic year: To gain access to a fairly representative sample, the survey was completed by doctoral candidates whose enrolment years ranged from 2009-2013.

3. Method

To collect the data needed in our investigative enquiry, we devised a fourteen-question, semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was submitted online. It was submitted to 78 potential respondents affiliated with five different university institutions. 39 out of those completed our survey. All informants were reminded through email twice to fill out the questionnaire. The data collection process spawned two phases; phase one from early September to Mid October 2021. During this phase 53 subjects were emailed the questionnaire URL. At the outset of phase two, from early November to early December 2021, we re-emailed the link to the remaining students who failed to respond and added 28 new potential participants. In the first phase, only three universities were selected. We resorted to phase two since only nine filled-in questionnaires were received.

The semi-structured questionnaire is divided up into five intertwined sections. Each section contributes to adding up further insights into the topic under investigation.

4. Data Description

Under this rubric we will dwell upon as detailed a description of the data gathered as space permits.

Table 1

The number of years it took for finishing a submittable thesis

Number of Years	Number	Percentages
03	00	00
04	6	15.38
05	17	43.58
06	13	33.33
07	03	07.69
08	00	00

The data embodied in this table unambiguously demonstrates that three years has proven to be an utterly inadequate academic period for doctoral thesis writing. It is worth mentioning at this juncture of the data description that locally graduate students are legally required to start submitting a defensible final version of their theses to the committee as of the middle of their third registration year and a legal two-year period of extension could be offered provided the supervisor submits a detailed, well-grounded report enumerating in minute details why their candidate has fallen short of meeting the set deadline. As the data in this table shows, a tiny proportion of the respondents needed a one-year extension, whilst most had to benefit from two, three and four years of extension, with four years corresponding to the lowest percentage.

Table 2*Respondents' Gender*

Gender	Numbers	Percentages
Male	32	82.05
Female	07	17.94

Table 02 demonstrates that the overwhelming bulk of the participants are females. Males do constitute a tiny minority of PhD holders. This gender-gap is manifestly echoed in the gender of university teachers and job applicants. It is likewise visible in the gender of the doctorate programme enrollers as such.

Table 3*Informants' Area of Specialization*

Speciality	Number	Percentages
Teaching Writing/writing	04	10.25
Applied linguistics	07	17.94
Linguistics	06	15.38
Didactics/Language Didactics	09	23.07
Testing the speaking skill/speaking	04	10.25
Cooperative writing/writing	02	05.12
Gothic studies	01	02.56
TEFL	06	15.38

This table shows that, out of all the participating doctorate holders, the biggest percentage goes to those majoring in teaching English as a Foreign Language (henceforth TEFL) and Didactics, 38.45. Although Didactics might appear to be so radically incongruous with TEFL, in the local academic settings, Didactics when mentioned as a sub-discipline at the English department it is usually used interchangeably with TEFL. After all, most, not to say all, researchers carry out research works which have one common denominator, teaching English to speakers of other languages, and in Algeria the speakers are mostly Arabic-speaking learners/students. Linguistics and Applied Linguistics graduates do constitute a large category as they collectively represent 32.32% of the entire sample. Teaching Writing/Writing as well as Testing the Speaking Skill/Speaking can be, roughly speaking, deemed as some other subdiscipline areas within the global academic arena of TEFL. This contributes to augmenting the percentage of TEFL, thereby rendering it a bigger category than all the others put together. The results show that only one participant comes from a Literary Discipline.

Table 4
Progress Inhibition Factors

Inhibitory Factors	Numbers	Percentages
The supervisor's procrastination/supervisor unavailability	12	30.76
Lack of intrinsic motivation	08	20.51
Ambiguity about my subject during the first two years	10	25.64
Paraphrasing and summarising critical thinking skills	06	15.38
teaching and supervision	14	35.89
Participants difficult availability	04	10.25
Publishing/lack of references	21	53.84
administrative hindrances	04	10.25
Domestic responsibilities	19	48.71
Financial issues to get a good computer to work on. Funding	13	33.33
Lack of research laboratories	06	15.38

As this is one of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire as a whole, some out of the participating doctors enumerated more than one inhibitory factor, hence the percentages. What is most readily conspicuous from this table is that causes leading up to hinderances are many and varied. Although not a large enough proportion of the participants referred to their supervisors as being primary inhibitory factors, supervisors' roles are clearly visible from the percentages portrayed in this table, as many as 12 students said that their supervisor's unavailability as well as procrastination contributed to slowing their progress down. The table shows that the major source of disruption, as it were, that slowed them down is lack of references since over half of the respondents listed this as a chief source of hinderance. Domestic responsibilities have been treated as one of the major majors, whose adverse impact outweighs that of the supervisors' roles since nearly half of the respondents listed this as a source of interference. Understandably, the overwhelming majority of the participants are female doctors, and whether married or otherwise, employed or otherwise, upon the whole, Algerian women's household chores and responsibilities does outnumber those of men counterparts.

Table 5
Progress Facilitative Factors

Facilitative factors	Numbers	Percentages
Deadlines	22	56.41
The covid-19 confinement	03	07.69
Supervisors' constant encouragement and guidance	24	61.53
Making parents/father/mother/husband happy	19	48.71
Self-motivation and the desire to be a Ph.D.; holder	10	25.64
Having a job/better job	17	43.58
Competition with peers	13	33.33
Support from family members/husband/co-workers	19	48.71
Having no kids	01	02.56
Administrative help	04	10.25
Benefiting from a scholarship abroad	05	12.82
The appearance of my first article ever.	03	07.69

This table shows that amongst the twelve listed factors which led to speeding up the research process supervisors' interventions and encouragement and deadlines enjoyed the highest percentages, with 63.53 and 56.41 respectively. The third and the fourth facilitative factors are aspirations to make other people happy and getting a job or a better job. Competition with peers and self-motivation and desire to earning the doctorate degree are listed as the fifth and the sixth most influential factors. 12.82 percent of the informants said that it was essentially thanks to the scholarship that were granted that research progress went smoothly.

Table 6
Frequency of Progress Cessation

Frequency	Numbers	Percentages
Never	7	17.94
Rarely	7	17.94
Sometimes	20	51.28
Often	5	12.82

As can be clearly seen from this table, temporal progress cessation can by no means be rated as one of the scarcest scenarios attested in the doctoral journey: over half of the respondents 51.28% said that they experienced it *sometimes* during their graduate academic venture. Five D.Phil. holders reported that they *often* went through this stoppage, whilst 17.94 % ticked off the *rarely* box. As few as only 7 participants stated that they never ran into this predicament.

Table 7
Temporal Stoppage Reasons

Reasons	Numbers	Percentages
Losing hope	3	07.69
Bureaucratic hinderances	3	07.69
Family and health problems.	15	38.46
exams and paper correction	12	30.76
Working as a part-time university teacher	11	28.20
Working as a full time middle-school high school teacher	08	20.51
Inability to generate new ideas	03	07.69
Teaching in the private sector	04	10.25
Lack of resources	19	48.71
Family problems	16	41.02
Health problems	12	30.76
Money issues (being unemployed)	07	17.94

To delve more profoundly into the all-too-baffling issue of how progress cessation could be better and more adequately understood and handled, we opted for inclusion of this present question into the overall fabric of our questionnaire. What one can deduce from the furnished responses is that working, regardless of the institution and/or the section and the status, seems to have been the chief factor out of which interruptions emanated. Financial problems have been listed as one of the temporal stoppage predictive factors. Similarly, some participants viewed health and family problems as some of factors to which non-permanent interruptions could be legitimately attributable.

Table 8
Supervisory Styles Positive Aspects

Aspects	Numbers	Percentages
Fully committed	22	56.41
Supported my self-reliance.	22	56.41
Believed in me.	20	51.28
Insistence on the publication of the article	08	20.51
We had deadlines for everything.	29	74.35
Answering my emails on daily basis,	11	28.20
Word for word corrections of my chapters.	15	38.46
Not putting much pressure on me	04	10.25
Having a good relation based on confidence	17	43.58
Advice, encouragements, and sometimes threatening	22	56.41
Setting challenges,	10	25.64
Offt-scheduled face-to-face meeting	18	46.15
Guided me and suggested ideas and resources.	15	38.46

The statements and percentages in this table denote that supervisory style features are many and varied. From the findings expounded herein, our subjects seemed to have laid especial emphasis on three major trappings likely to be observed in the supervisory styles characteristic of many supervisors utterly regardless of their academic disciplines, age or credentials, notably:

- a) Insistence on setting up well-informed deadlines at every new phase of the research pathway;
- b) Attaching due importance to scheduling face-to-face meetings on a regular basis;
- c) Being fully and unconditionally committed to their duties as supervisors;
- d) Placing sufficient, energy-boosting, progress-lubricating confidence in the capabilities of their supervisees; and
- e) Establishing and maintaining good relations with thieer candidates.

Table 9*Supervisory Styles Negative Aspects*

Negative Aspect	Numbers	Percentages
Waiting for my turn to fix an appointment for correction.	10	25.64
Asking for work plans and research progress all the time	06	15.38
Slow correction	08	20.51
No feedback, no assessment, no evaluation	01	02.56
Late correction	02	05.12
Imposing ideas	01	02.56
Taking long time to read and provide feedback	02	05.12
Careless	01	02.56
His busy schedule supervising other tens of students at the same time	13	33.33
Lack of knowledge and experience in my field of research	03	07.69
Changing plans	02	05.12
None	12	30.76

The responses reflected in the above table show that the PhD completers who took part in our research enterprise went through ordeals and predicaments which can be readily ascribable to their supervisors as such. It is worthy of mention, however, that not all the doctors who filled in the questionnaire had diagnosed negative, counter-productive practices hallmarking the supervisory scenes they experienced: as many as 12 informants wrote *none* as their answer to this question.

Table 10*Primary References Experience Access Challenges*

Problem existence	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	29	74.35
No	10	25.64

The percentages in this table reveal that the overwhelming majority of the respondents, 74.35%, had to grapple with the time-consuming, usually borderline unresolvable, ordeal of reference inaccessibility. It is a widely known fact that, locally, gaining easy and quick access to the specialised books whose thematic scopes revolve around linguistics and TEFL and other related fields is a tough nut to crack for two main reasons: 1) Hard copies of these books continue to be a scarcity in the local market, and 2) Only a vanishingly small number of students can purchase them online either because they cannot afford them or because they do not own credit/visa cards whereby they can operationalise e-payments.

Table 11
Strategies for Coping with References Shortages

Strategies	Numbers	Percentages
Striving to buy them from the publisher, though expensive they might	04	10.25
Looking for other references or end up using a secondary reference	08	20.51
Using Google books	07	17.49
Searching for free online libraries	34	89.74
Contacting their authors	04	10.25
Contacting Good friends and contacts abroad	13	33.33
Asking for the help of computer experts to download the reference	10	25.64
Joining PhD candidates Facebook communities	28	71.79

From this table a number of observations can be made:

- i. The biggest proportion of the informants resorted to online solutions to make up for the shortage of references.
- ii. A considerably big number of the participants chose to join Facebook groups where they expected to receive guidance from doctoral students from local as well as global academic communities.
- iii. Only few doctors opted for purchasing the costly books that they needed.
- iv. A tiny minority either chose to drop the book they needed and replace it with a secondary source or went for contacting the author per se for assistance.

Table 12
Literature Review Writing Plan

Writing Plan	Numbers	Percentages
Researching and writing about one chapter at a time	33	84.61
Researching and writing about two or more chapters simultaneously	06	15.38

Findings expounded in this table patently demonstrate that most of the respondents inclined towards *researching and writing about one single chapter at a time*, whilst only a tiny minority preferred to *write about two chapters* simultaneously.

Table 13
Peer Manuscript Peer Review

Peer Review Use	Numbers	Percentages
Yes	01	2.56
No	38	97.43

It is straightforwardly transparent from the answers displayed in table 13 that peer correction was by no means amongst the researchers' toolkit constituents for more readily tracking down writing shortcomings. Almost all the participants stated that they did not utilise this at all. The following table encompasses the rationales underpinning their practices vis-vis peer review significance.

Table 14
Non-Deployment of Peer Review Rationales

Motives	Numbers	Percentages
You have considered this option at all	36	92.30
None of the other students accepted to do the proofreading for you	02	5.12
Your supervisor banned you from such a practice	00	00
You did not place much faith into the other students' credentials	01	02.56

The percentages in table 14 depict the overriding reasons why the informants did not deploy peer correction as one of the rewardingly tangible strategies whereby they could guarantee that their manuscripts would eventually be as free of blemishes and discrepancies as possible: virtually all the respondents said that this tactic had never been on their researcher radar altogether.

This question has an open ending to it, as respondents were requested to mention the reasons that made them not take recourse to peer collaboration as a means of assistance in polishing off their work. The following are their responses (reproduced verbatim):

- i. Most of my friends are overwhelmed working on their theses. So, I did not consider that at all. However, I asked a friend of mine to proofread my article since it is not very long and time consuming.
- ii. All my trustworthy friends were basically struggling/working on their own thesis. It would have been selfish on my part to ask them to proofread my thesis while I know ahead how frustrated and busy they must be.

5. Discussions and Interpretations of Findings

This study of ours has set out to get to the roots of what characteristics completers own which empowered them to persist and eventually be granted the doctorate degree. Arguably, unearthing the myriad factors that led to doctoral completion is one of the most effective steps towards a more satisfactory assimilation of why and under what unique circumstances attrition at the graduate level takes place. We have attempted to contribute to the existing literature and research findings in this particular area because of the paucity of such undertakings in the Algerian academic sphere, as studies whose scope matches ours are sparingly few. Insightfully diverse in scope, objectives and theoretical underpinnings though many of them are, drawing wholly and unconditionally upon the findings of research works undertaken at overseas institution might be an entirely unwholesome practice since the settings, whether they be academic, socio-economic or indeed otherwise, are strikingly different. To give substance to my findings and interpretations, I will endeavour, whenever appropriate and relevant, to compare my study to previous like-scoped ones in the field as a whole.

Our findings do corroborate those of Litalien and Guay (2015). Their study disclosed that perceived competence is one of the most saliently discernible predictors of persistence and eventual doctoral completion. Perception of self-worth was amongst the key concepts investigated in their study and they set out to only explicitly measure the extent of which this relates to success or failure. Our study, on the other hand, did not aim to overwhelmingly measure this factor as such: we aspired to get to the bottom of as many factors as possible which are likely to lead to success. Nowhere in the gathered data is there the faintest indication that our subjects experienced any feelings of downgraded self-worth or lack of competence. On the contrary, even when asked to furnish explanatory statements bearing on the factors that collectively contributed to lowering their progress speed, none of the subjects referred to perceived lowered

confidence or decreasing competence or anything in the vicinity. This might be taken to signify that they battled with no progress-threatening perceptions of lowered competence.

Amongst the chief aims of our study lies the investigation of the significance supervisors' multifaceted roles and how they might be intertwined with students' persistence qualities and lack of it. From the participants' responses to some of the questions described above, it is noticeable that the paramount importance of the supervisors' multi-tiered interventions cannot be overstated. Owing to exclusively space-constraints, I sufficed with giving the briefest, most sufficiently representative account of the respondents' answers with regard to their estimates of their supervisors' laudable contributions

Although Golde (2005) investigated why doctoral attritors decided not to pursue their academic investments in the graduate level and mine investigated completers' traits, our studies seem to have something in common. Stated differently, her subjects were compelled to leave the programme prematurely partly because of supervisors' hindrances, like poor relationships with their supervisors and their supervisors' lack of expertise in their particular field of enquiry. The subjects in my study persisted and eventually earned the PhD degree thanks partly to their reportedly good experiences with how their supervisors routinely went about their mission.

The current study has shown that the subjects had not taken the fullest advantage possible of their surrounding academic community. Although they managed to make their research and writing efforts come to fruition, I assume that if they had dealt differently with their peers, their journey would have comparatively shorter and far less straining. They were asked in the questionnaire to state whether and for what peculiar reasons they opted for/out of using peer-provided reviews of their various theses manuscripts. Most of the completers penned that they had not even considered this option. It stands to reason that the more diversified the strategies graduate students recognize and put to optimal good use, the less likely they are to run into hurdles and the more protected they become against any potential attrition intentions that may stem from colossal stress. As most doctoral students walk into this terrain full of suspicions, fears and besieged with uncertainties, they may not be armed with all manner of facilitative protective tactics. This takes me back to how virtually infinite the duties of supervisors may turn out to be if they genuinely aspire to minimize the range of attrition-augmenting factors and ease up the countless burdens universally associated with doctoral studies.

IV. Conclusion

Dropout at the doctoral level could be viewed as the worst type of scholastic attrition as the range of diverse losses it is likely to trigger off is rather big. After all, the students who prematurely leave such programmes are amongst the most highly qualified members of the academic community and are excellent prospective contributors to the national workforce of their own areas of expertise. Every effort must be made to cut down on mostly all the robust inhibitory factors which might bring about attrition intentions. The present paper has attempted to bring to the light of day some of the most prevalent factors that may lie behind success rates at the doctoral level in Algeria, at English departments. The research topic my paper has addressed is one of the least chartered ones by academics in Algeria across the board, not solely at English or foreign languages departments. Undertakings having an analogous scope to my own are strongly encouraged. By the same token, researchers may want to investigate the traits of dropouts as such and what led them to take the drastic decisions they ended up

making. Cross-departmental surveys could be conducted to glean different genres of data which is prone to lead to more insightfully varied findings.

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