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RESEARCH CONFERENCE
NEXT GENERATION INSIGHTS ON
INTRACTABLE NATIONAL AND
GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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Augmenting Doctoral Success for ‘non-traditional students’: A Phenomenological Inquiry of Emerging Researchers

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Equitable Education & Economies



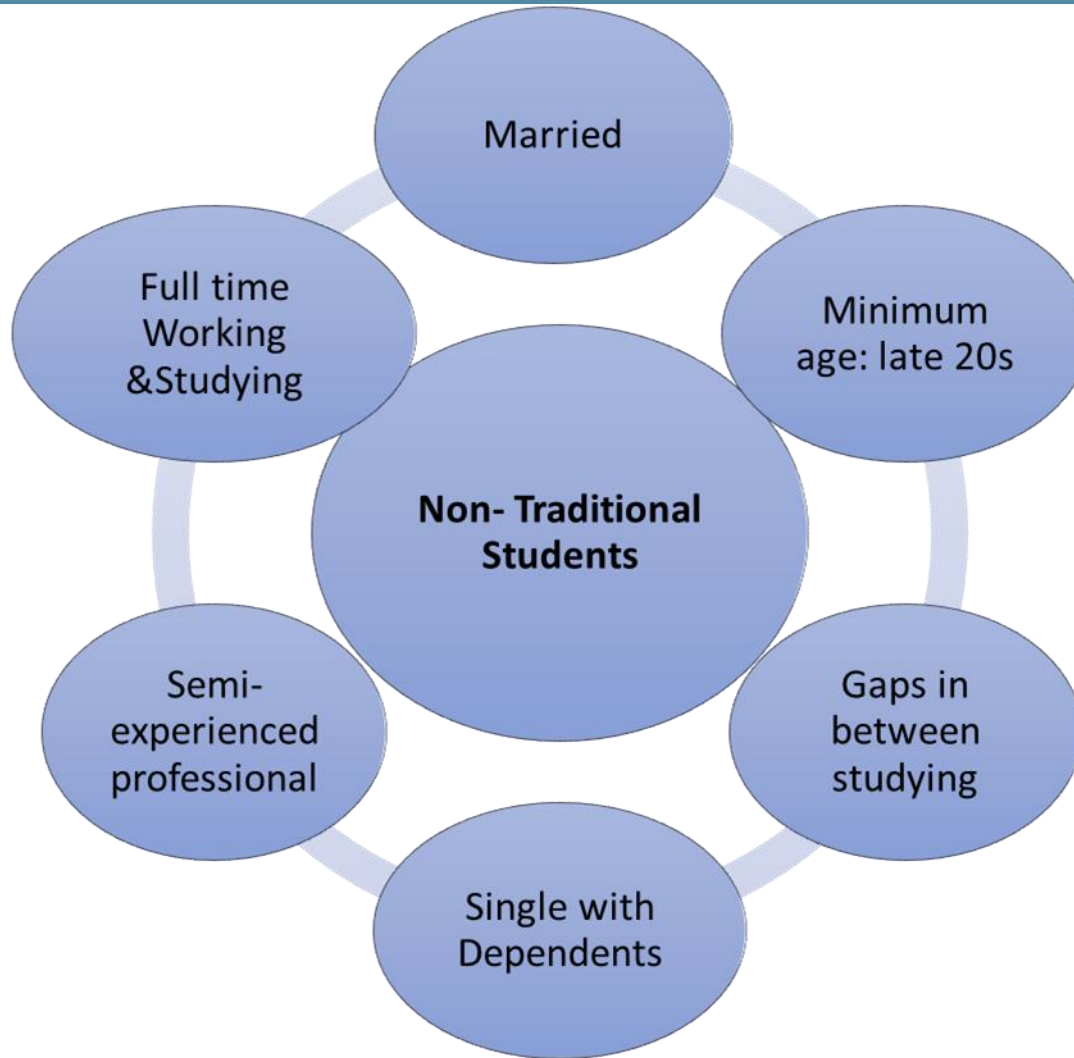
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Defining:(Non)-Traditional students



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Student-doctoral Fit & Student Success







- 🌀 Literature directed considerable attention to Doctoral Education:
Supervision, attrition rates, models of education, untimely completion, Mental health.

- 🌀 MISSING: UNDERSTANDING **DOCTORAL SUCCESS THROUGH THEORY OF FIT (Student Experience & Institutional Practices)**

- 🌀 **Ward and Brennan's (2020) Student Doctoral Fit**
- 🌀 Developed from Baker & Pifer 2015 (Limited to curriculum fit)
- 🌀 *Proposed multidimensional framework*
 1. Student-doctoral environment
 2. Student vocation
 3. Student-doctoral culture

METHODOLOGY

-  Qualitative Inquiry: 15 semi-structured interviews
-  Emerging researchers of a research organization
-  **Purposive Sampling**
 - Active Doctoral Students, Recently graduated PhDs
-  **Data Analysis:**
 - Deductive: a priori template of codes (From Framework)
 - Inductive : Themes/Codes from Interview data



Getting To Know The Participants



- 🌀 **9 Females**
- 🌀 **Black and Coloured**
- 🌀 **Historically disadvantaged Universities**
- 🌀 **4 Mothers**
- 🌀 **3 Married**
- 🌀 **Age group 25-40**

- 🌀 **6 Males**
- 🌀 **Black and Coloured**
- 🌀 **Historically disadvantaged Universities**
- 🌀 **1 Father & Married**
- 🌀 **Age group 25-40**



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FINDINGS



1. Family & Work Structures, contributors of PhD success
2. Work Mentors Providing doctoral support
3. Challenges with Academic Writing
4. Institutional & Administrative Challenges



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Family & Work Structure: Contributor to Doctoral Success



“You need a good **family structure** because there will be times where you are away from the family engagements.... You also need a supportive **work structure** at work”

(Participant C: Married Female, 32 years)



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Work Mentors Provide More Support



“My **supervisor** at the university tries their level best but I feel my **research organization** does a better job in terms of giving me the **expertise** I need. Especially with publications I am doing my PhD through publication, and I get more insight from my **mentor**”.

(Participant H: Single Male, 32 years old)



Challenges and Expectations in Academic Writing



“**Publishing** is hard I will not lie currently I have **one paper** that I have published for my PhD and my studies are done through publication”.

(Participant F: Single Male, 28 years old)



Isolated from university experience



- Academic structures continue to be based on the “**traditional students**”
- Limited engagement with faculty activities
- “**Ghosted**” by University Supervisor
- No **physical presence** university premises.



(Multiple Participants: Mostly from disadvantaged universities)

PhD Delays Due To Administrative Time Frames








- 🌀 Ethical Clearance: **> 1 Year**
- 🌀 Chapter/s Feedback & Signoff
- 🌀 Thesis Examination
- 🌀 Institutional processes affect student performance- **time to degree**



(Multiple Participants, Historically disadvantaged universities)

Discussion & Implications





-  Participants exhibited a diverse **range of views** regarding **fit factors**, individual experiences play a role.
-  Variation in Fit Factors: **Doctoral environment**, others felt a significant misfit.
-  **Implications**
-  National Development Plan 2030: **100** PhD graduates per 1 million (Quantity, Output).
-  Doctoral Candidates & Supervisors: To better understand and mentor students based on their **fit** profiles.



Future Research Directions



LIMITATIONS:

- *Methodological*: Qualitative
Mixed Methods
- Predicting the relationship between fit and the individual.
-  Include *control variables* to try to capture differences in the characteristics of individuals (age, gender, marital status).
-  Framework is wide and from a different jurisdiction.



Summary



🎓 The journey to doctoral success is shaped by multifaceted factors. 🎓 How does the right 'fit' impact students, advisors, and institutions? 🤝 This research paves the way for personalized support and a brighter future in doctoral education!

#PhDLife #StudentSuccess #HigherEd"



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