


Chapter 4

The Dissertation Compass: Strategies for Scholarly Success

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ABSTRACT

The Dissertation Compass: Strategies for Scholarly Success” is a comprehensive guide for PhD scholars, providing insights into the complex process of a doctoral dissertation. It emphasizes the importance of familiarity with research goals and covers topics such as formulating research questions, designing theoretical frameworks, and choosing appropriate methodologies. The guide also provides practical advice on structuring and writing the dissertation and skills needed in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It emphasizes the importance of motivation, addressing issues, and creating an effective support system. The book empowers postgraduate candidates to claim their position as scholars and build confidence

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in the research process.

INTRODUCTION

The dissertation process creates a layered and challenging problem, so many candidates find it difficult to navigate. This journey includes several stages, such as choosing the topic, designing the research, collecting the data, analyzing it, and finally, writing the thesis. Each of these stages presents its own set of problems. Completing these stages can prove to be quite overwhelming, creating anxiety and stress among students, especially if one is faced with time management issues, unclear research objectives, or maintaining motivation throughout the process (Rafi & Moghees, 2022; Silinda, 2018). Many of them find themselves in this zone during the transition from coursework to the dissertation phase, trying to manage the expectations of their advisors and the academic community (Scott & Johnson, 2021). If not equipped with the correct tools for independent research, this stage can be much more daunting than it should be, creating a need for support systems that guide students during this phase of their academic careers (Glazek et al., 2018; Major, 2023).

The lack of appropriate guidance to maneuver through these academic intricacies can be detrimental. In the case of doctoral students, effective mentorship and organized aid systems are likely to assist them in overcoming challenges relating to writing dissertations (Major, 2023). It has been discovered that students who have access to preparatory classes, workshops, as well as mentorship programs are equipped to handle the intricacies involved in conducting dissertation research (Ciampa & Wolfe, 2019; Vidair et al., 2019). In addition to the skills and knowledge imparted, these students also form a social network that combats the sense of loneliness and increases motivation (“Virtual Dissertation Circles: Student Engagement Strategies and Lessons Learned”, 2022). Moreover, students’ experiences with dissertation writing get better with the availability of knowledgeable advisors who inform them of the academic environment and improve their experience with the transition from classes to research (Dericks et al., 2019; Maul et al., 2018).

This chapter is designed to help PhD students and their supervisors grasp the fundamental elements of dissertation research. By identifying the key stages of work on a dissertation, this work attempts to clarify the process and suggest practical solutions towards its completion. Students should realize that the dissertation is not only an academic hurdle that they need to jump through to get their degree, it is an avenue to add value to their area of specialization. Using primary data and interviews with a PhD nurse, Chiware & Becker (2018) outline the dissertation journey. The authors underscore the fact that undertaking and developing a research proposal is

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