


Chapter 5

Navigating the Dissertation Journey: Psychological Insights Into Motivation and Persistence

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation process is a challenging journey requiring motivation and self-regulation to complete and succeed. Candidates often encounter psychological challenges during the dissertation process that impact their persistence and completion. Understanding the challenges associated with the dissertation process from a psychological perspective can give insight into understanding motivation and persistence. This chapter explores the dissertation process and the role of motivation through a focus on cognition, emotion, and behavior. The exploration of motivation is rooted in psychological theories, including self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990), and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). This chapter also offers practical applications for strategies that candidates, supervisors, and institutions

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can leverage to navigate and mitigate challenges throughout the dissertation process.

INTRODUCTION

The dissertation journey represents a unique psychological challenge in academic life for some. A demanding balancing act of sustained cognitive effort, behavioral consistency, and emotional resilience can be considered standard practices of a doctoral candidate. The interplay of psychological demands plays a role in fundamentally shaping not only the scholarly quality of the dissertation but also can be seen as determining whether a candidate perseveres to completion. Recent research indicates that dissertation completion is significantly influenced by the interaction of academic motivation, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being (Acharya & Rajendran, 2023; Jackman et al., 2022). Understanding the psychological dimensions that a doctoral candidate can experience, and balance provides crucial insights for doctoral candidates and their advisors in navigating this challenging academic milestone.

Current Research Landscape

Recent research discusses the psychological dimensions of dissertation work, which have emerged as crucial determinants of success. Acharya and Rajendran (2023) established fundamental connections between academic motivation and performance, while Jackman et al. (2022) demonstrated how these relationships are mediated by social identification and mental well-being. Building on these findings, Huang and Yang (2024) revealed how institutional environments moderate these effects, suggesting successful interventions through individual and organizational factors.

Jackman et al. (2022) identified key cognitive patterns associated with resilience, while Zhang et al. (2022) demonstrated how these patterns interact with social support systems to influence persistence. The findings by Wollast et al. (2023) established connections between academic engagement and completion outcomes.

Contemporary research highlights the interplay between cognitive, behavioral, and emotional domains. Calle-Arango and Reyes (2023) demonstrated how holistic support models addressing multiple psychological dimensions enhance doctoral outcomes, complementing the findings by Devos et al. (2015), which reveal institutional support mechanisms that influence psychological well-being and academic persistence. Research into the psychological dimensions of a candidate's dissertation has underscored the need for a holistic approach to doctoral education, emphasizing the necessity for a comprehensive approach to doctoral education that integrates psychological and pedagogical support, fosters a strong sense of belonging, and

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