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Exploring the Role of Peer Support in Overcoming Thesis Writing Challenges in Education

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Abstract

The objective of this article was to explore the role of peer support in overcoming thesis writing challenges in Education. This article examines peer support in an effort to address these challenges with reference to graduate students in the University of Gujrat. The present study employs a qualitative paradigm to investigate the ways in which students' peer cooperation, such as co-writing, exchanging feedback, and emotional encouragement, helps them address challenges in the writing of the thesis. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from survey questionnaires, focus group discussion, and interviews of students enrolled in thesis writing. These results suggest that peer support; boosts the level of confidence in academics, strengthens critical thinking abilities, and fast tracks development of ideas by creating an effective yet natural problem-solving and suggestion sharing environment. The current study further supports the idea of applying peer networks as an additional approach promising to enhance the rates of thesis completion, as well as alleviating the students' stress levels. It is suggested that such schemes should be made more formal for

encouraging students to write more and for providing other supports including those offered through peer write clubs and mentors. This work extends the knowledge on collaborative learning and demonstrates the use of the approach for improving the thesis writing process within learning settings.

Keywords: Role of Peer Support, Overcoming Thesis Writing, Challenges in Academic Writing, Education

Background of the Study

Writing of thesis is part of graduate learning process and is a complex undertaking that calls for enhanced, and refined academic writing and research skills. But it could also be rife with problems such us time constraints, inability to write, low self-esteem, and inadequate feedback (Aitchison & Lee, 2006). These include problems that may slow down student learning, raise academic anxiety and prolong work on the thesis where the institutional support systems are weak (Ali & Ullah, 2021).

It is the culture of students that have come out strongly to be effective in handling the above challenges by providing support to their peers through collaborative learning and promoting emotional support. Protein synthesis is considered to be socially constructed within learners' zones of proximal development, as they interact with peers, as postulated by Vygotsky (1978). Those students can express their ideas, worries and demands which will help them to come through academic challenges better through peer support (Shantz et al., 2021).

Thus, when it comes to thesis writing, peer support is thing, which include writing together, reviews, and discussions, which in turn increases academic self-confidence and doesn't let students feel alone in writing their thesis (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011). In this respect, the present study proved findings of other scholars who noted that peer interactions do not only enhance the quality of the performance in writing tasks but also help to alleviate the feeling of loneliness,

which students tend to experience while writing their theses (Li & Vandermensbrugghe, 2011).

Altogether, although peer support in thesis writing is effective, it is not well employed in many institutions of learning especially in the developing world of Pakistan. Paper which is derived from the Pakistani context underlines the fact that graduate students grapple academic writing not just because they were underprepared but they get very little help from institutions (Bashir et al., 2020). Where some universities have begun writing centers and workshops, these are not adequate to dealing with complexity of the thesis writing process holistically.

The University of Gujrat offers an opportunity to examine the capacity of peer support in addressing the thesis writing difficulties. Being a mid-sized university with a diverse student population, it affords an appreciation on the nexus between peer relations and achievement in a deficit-resource context. By identifying specific ways through which peer support can help to address difficulties in thesis writing, this study will contribute to completing the existing literature in the discussed area and provide rather useful suggestions to improve the students' academic performance.

Problem Statement

Engaging in thesis writing is a very important yet stressful task encountered in graduative education, which includes issues like poor motivation, poor structure of arguments, little feedback and poor self-esteem. They result in a longer time to complete the thesis and high academic pressure in environments that there is inadequate support from an institution. Indeed at the University of Gujrat many a student encounter the same challenges, besides they lack privileges of enlisting for writing support services and developmental programs. It has been acknowledged that peer support might be a solution for such challenges, where a professional presents ideas, experiences, and encouragement from peers. However, the extent of how peer support can be utilized to address these issues in Pakistan has not

been researched earlier. Thus, this study set out to find out how peer support has assisted students to overcome this thesis writing difficulties and to find out on how the University of Gujrat can improve on the peer support system being applied by the students in the current University framework.

Research Questions

1) What is the attitude of the University of Gujrat students towards the use of peers to address thesis writing concern?

2) Which elements of peer support positively affect the results of thesis writing among students from the field of education?

Literature Review

Tutorials and assignments are a significant part of the general learning process in higher education institutions, with Thesis writing widely recognized as the greatest concern, accompanied by the following drawbacks: Academic isolation, limited feedback, and inadequate preparation for Thesis writing. Research shows that social relations and cooperative learning as effective ways in dealing with these difficulties (Aitchison & Lee, 2006). Of these, peer support has been identified as one of the key factors which facilitate success in student's performance and emotional well-being during thesis writing phase (Li and Vandermensbrugghe, 2011).

Thesis Writing Challenges

The challenges faced by students especially during thesis writing have been well explained in literature. Lack of training in research skills, time management, and language, especially using English as the medium of writing were cited by Ali and Ullah (2021). However, these challenges cut across time causing delay in the completion of a thesis and increase stress levels. In addition, Bashir et al. (2020) found that there is no systematic writing assistance in educational organizations, and because of this, students face these challenges alone when trying to complete thesis writing.

PS as a Moderator

Group support with emphasis on encouragement, reciprocation of feedback, and cooperation in handling problems has been affirmed to be a useful means of easing the difficulties of thesis writing. Prompted by the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky, (1978), it is acknowledged that peers play crucial roles in learning processes, and that collaboration between learners influence their cognitive and emotional growth. In the academic writing, peer support opens up the occasions for the exchange of ideas, criticism and emotional reinforcement leaving the gloomy feeling of aloneness and nurturing the spirit of affiliative attachment (McAlpine & Amundsen 2011).

According to Li & Vandermensbrugghe 2011 students who are assigned to peer writing groups notice enhanced quality of thesis drafts through the input and perspectives from other students. According to study done by Zhao et al. (2021), the students not only get help with writing from peers, but get additional encouragement in the process. They are in congruity to other related studies that suggest that, learning happens more optimally, if students are encouraged to be active in their learning and are provided with communal learning spaces (Aitchison & Lee, 2006).

The Pakistani Context

Consequently, in Pakistan, the responsibility of peer support in academic writing is not much researched. Bashir et al. (2020) point to the absence of organized peer support frameworks in university setting and this see students relying on that supervisors or peers in general interactions. Some of these interventions include writing centers and workshops and these are generally inadequate to address the complexity of graduate learner needs. Furthermore, cultural expectations as well as highly demanding academic settings may make it difficult for students to ask for or provide peer help (Ali & Ullah, 2021).

Research Gap

However, while literatures highlight the importance of peer support the literature that compares and contrasts it with traditional academic writing support on how it might address thesis writing difficulties in the context of the Pakistani education is scarce. It is at the University of Gujrat that one can potentially derive how peer support can be utilized in the best way to resolve such problems. This work intends to fill the gap within the said literature by examining the influence of peer interactions on thesis writing performance with emphasis on the strategies so as to facilitate collaborative learning and support within graduate education.

Research Methodology

To address this research question, this study utilizes mixed research methods since the research seeks to understand how peer support can assist graduate students in the education department at the University of Gujrat overcome the thesis writing challenges that they face. In this study, both numerical and narrative approaches will be used to reveal the nature and effects of students' interactions when working on writing assignments.

Research Design

The integration carries out a concurrent mixed method approach where quantitative surveys are combined with qualitative focuses group discussions and interviews. I have attempted to use this approach to make sure that possible quantitative side of peer support as well as the qualitatively individual experiences of the students is also looked into.

Population and Sampling

Graduate students in the education department of the University of Gujrat who are currently involved in thesis writing form the sample population of this study. A purposive sampling technique is employed to identify and recruit participants who have sought, or have offered, peer support while working on their thesis projects. The sample includes:

Survey participants: 60 students.

Focus group discussions: Six to eight students are to be grouped in two different groups.

Interviews: Ten participants were purposely selected to elicit their experiences for further analysis.

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Data Collection

This study uses a structured questionnaire which aims at establishing the frequency of peer support as well as the type and perceived efficacy of the support. It uses closed-ended questions volume with a 5-Likert scale rubrics to provide an indication of students' perception of peer support on various features, feedback exchange, and collaborative onboard learning and emotional support.

Qualitative Data Collection

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Two FGD sessions are employed to examine the group perspective and experience of students engaged in peer support.

In-depth Interviews: A series of interviews with selected participants are conducted in order to get more elaborate information on the subject of individual experiences, concerns and attitudes to peer relations.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

While the survey data collected, descriptive as well as inferential statistical tools are used to analyze the data collected. To analyze the results, a method of frequency, percent, and overmean method is employed; in order to find out the relation between Peer support and Thesis writing index, chi-square test and correlation coefficient test were used.

Qualitative Analysis

Categorisation of data is done with regard to its thematic nature to analyse data collected from FGDs and interviews. Data collected is then sorted according to

themes like type of peer support being received, perceived gains from the interaction and losses, and other perceived barriers to effective peer collaboration. From these results, the qualitative results are incorporated in the study to support and gave context to the quantitative findings.

Ethical Considerations

The research was approved by the University of Gujrat's research ethics committee for conducting the study. Participant consent is taken from participants to explain the purpose of the study, the participant's voluntary nature, and the anonymity of their response. Participants provide consent and are given identification numbers, whilst data is kept secured to ensure that anonymity of participants is upheld.

Limitations

The fact that this research is carried out only among the graduate students of the University of Gujrat in education department could reduce the generalization of the research findings. Furthermore, the collection of data solely for self- reports means that there might be social desirable response bias among the population of students, lecturers and other workers.

This methodology provides a strong paradigm for investigating how peer support enhances thesis writing efforts to mitigate writing difficulties and addresses the proposed research objectives with statistical strength and rich, qualitative insights simultaneously.

Data Analysis and Results

The authors in this section make assumptive analysis and interpretation of survey data in complement with Focus Group Discussions and Interviews. The results are presented to match each of the research questions in order to help the reader to navigate them more easily.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Demographic Information

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=60)	Percentage
Gender	Male	28	46.7%
	Female	32	53.3%
Programme	M. A Education	35	58.3%
	M. Ed	25	41.7%
Peer Support Engagement	Frequent	40	66.7%
	Occasional	15	25.0%
	Rare/Never	5	8.3%

Perceived Benefits of Peer Support

Table 2: Responses Regarding the Benefits of Peer Support

Benefit	Mean Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation
Improved writing quality	4.3	0.71
Enhanced understanding of structure	4.1	0.68
Emotional encouragement	4.5	0.65
Reduced stress	4.2	0.73
Increased motivation	4.4	0.62

The level of perceived benefits of receiving support from peers was equally high: the most beneficial type was emotional encouragement (AVG=4.5) followed by motivation enhancement (AVG=4.4). This underlines the both academic and emotional functions of two peers work together.

Correlations between Peer Support Frequency and Writing Outcomes

Table 3: Cross-Tabulation Between Peer Support Engagement and Perceived Enhancement of Thesis Writing Result

Variable	r-value	p-value
Frequency of Peer Support	0.65	<0.01
Writing Outcomes		

The study shows the relationship between the frequency of peer support and the results of thesis writing, as a positive correlation with a coefficient of r = 0.65 (p <0.01) thus meaning that peer support should be used as effective intervention approach.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Focus group discussion findings are displayed below with each focus group identified by a letter; A, B, C, D etc.

Types of Peer Support

Academic: From the results, participants stated they benefited from comments about their grammatical patterns and have noting systems, among other things.

Emotional: Students said that communication with peers helped to cope with stress while writing specific sections of the thesis.

Challenges in Peer Support

Time constraints affecting collaboration since the participants were kill individually engaged in academic works. The variation in knowledge of peers which at time hindered feedback.

Extracts of FGDs and Interviews

I also saw how we can discuss the structure of our arguments to come up with better forms of them. They provided such examples that were more useful than my supervisor's recommendations are easier to implement here. (Participant 4)

'Sometimes just knowing that someone else is feeling as I am feeling made it possible for me to continue.' (Participant 8)

Summary of Findings

Sharing with peers is a critical source of support in the academic and emotional part of thesis development.

Again, peer support indicating the level of usage is statistically significant and positively related to the percentage of perceived improvements in the quality and the structure of the writing. Conditions like time scarcity and dissimilar levels of peer knowledge have to be resolved in the most optimal ways in order to enhance the use of peer cooperation.

Discussion

The developmental research maps out the core social support of peers in the socio-psychological and socio-cognitive problem-solving process of graduate students in thesis writing. Thus, the study uses both quantitative and qualitative data to increase understanding of the role of peers in students' academy and emotional well-being in the education department of the University of Gujrat.

Students as Colleagues and Scholars

The quantitative study shows that the extended availability of peer support improves the thesis writing results considerably. According to the responses received, the ability to write better, understand how thesis statements are written, and citation usage all received positive responses. These views are consistent with previous works done by McAlpine, and Amundsen, (2018), who stressed that thesis writing is a process that takes place in a community of scholars.

Peer feedback was identified as the key feature of the academic growth process since it allowed learners to spot mistakes, work on their reasons, and follow academic requirements. This idea will again be highlighted in the qualitative results, where participants reported that the peer feedback was more actionable and realistic than supervisor feedback. This supports the integration of

peers to supplement the conventional supervisory associations proposed by Lee and Murray (2015).

Emotional of Peer Support

This paper finds that students receive not only academic support but also help with emotions that are part of undertaking thesis work. The findings revealed that the aspects of emotional encouragement and stress reduction were most valued in the sense that the majority of clients mentioned it and responded positively to questions about it in the survey. These results are in line with Cotterall (2013) who pointed at psychological stress encountered while writing a thesis and importance of having constructive friends group.

Of the social aspects noted by the participants, appeared a common theme of how peers reduced loneliness, enhanced the sense of belonging, as well as increased motivation. This is expected because forming academic relationships and appreciating people behind every door are important aspects that should be encouraged in any school and especially in culturally collectivistic context of Pakistan where people oriented approach to education remain key (Shamim, 2008).

Challenges in Peer Support

With all these benefits, there are also issues that trap peer support. The study revealed that time was a limiting factor and that peers had different level of knowledge concerning issues. These findings can be discussed with the findings of Aitchison and Lee (2006) who pointed that, the participants' commitment and shared understanding of the content standards define successful peer interactions. These problems can best be solved by structured peer support programs that offer education and schedule time for the staff to work together.

The Role of Context

The results of this study can therefore only be understood from within the socio cultural and institutional dynamics of the University of Gujrat. Raising and focusing on group learning and the hardships of the student within the same

academic setting seem to have developed the innate desire to collaborate with peers. This draws attention on the conditions that come into play when determining the approaches and the interactions among the peers since Wenger (1998) in his theory of communities of practice.

Implications for Practice

The finding of the study has the following educational, administrative, and policy implications. The universities may need to instigate organized opportunity for colleagues to engage in peer support models such as peer assistance schemes like peer mentoring or writing teams. Further, micro-fiction workshops addressing peer feedback approaches and managing time might improve the effectiveness on these endeavours.

Contribution to Literature

This study adds further research development to the existing peer support literature in higher education context by providing empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of peer support for thesis writing in Pakistani context. With these treatment components focusing on both the academic and the emotional aspect of the students, the study fills the gap in the literature and underscores the integration of peer support.

Constraints and Possibility of Development

Although the study is useful, it has some drawbacks concerning its scope – one institution and one discipline only. Subsequent research studies might also examine the effectiveness of peer support in other academic settings and deliver contexts with low cultural relevance. Further, longitudinal investigation could also investigate whether peer collaboration do have an influence on the academic achievements and organizational performance.

Therefore, based on the elements of peer support, cooperative structures are an essential resource in the academic process of graduate students dealing with the problem of thesis writing. That is why, being an academic process oriented on

both learners' growth and development of the necessary psychological readiness for their future experiences, it provides a cooperative space that contributes to learning. It is therefore important for institutions to encourage most and possibly institutionalizes the peer support mechanisms to help student gain all the benefits.

Conclusion

In this research, an effort was made to establish the effectiveness of peer support in mitigating writing a thesis difficulties confronting graduate students in the education department of the University of Gujrat. In the study, the analysis shows that peer support is an essential feature that plays a key role in positive experience regarding coping with academic as well as emotional issues in the context of the thesis writing process. Three of the most common self-identified benefits as a result of peer interactions include; students felt that their writing ability had improved, understood the academic structures better and perceived that they had gained the ability to endure the rigors of thesis writing.

Accordingly, the results underscored two valuable aspects of peer relationships: academic engagement based on interaction in form of constructive peer feedback and emotional support since stress was reduced, and feelings of loneliness lessen. The positive correlation between the regular interpeer interaction and the changes – improvements regarding theses outcomes confirmed the benefits of learning environments.

But there were also obstacles such as time scarcity and the difference in the academic backgrounds of peers, which makes the peer support process problematic. Refuting these barriers calls for university standardization and backup of peer collaboration endeavors like the solid peer mentoring programs and writing communities besides availing resources for fine tuning to advantage from peer relations.

In conclusion, peer support is an important element that helps students to address the challenges of thesis writing at both the professional and, sometimes, personal

level. The results advance the theory of collaborative learning in higher learning institutions especially in the culturally collective environment such as Pakistan. Through effective implementation of peer supporting systems in education institutions, chances are very high that the institutions can foster a friendly learning environment that enables students defy odds and excel.

Such findings call for more and more extensive papers examining the generalizability for utilization of the peer support interventions across the variety of disciplines, settings, and cultures.

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