

FACTORS AFFECTING GRADUATION OF MASTER'S DEGREE STUDENTS IN MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM, GRADUATE STUDIES, SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This research employed a quantitative approach to examine the factors affecting the graduation of Master's degree students in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) Program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The study sample comprised 40 participants enrolled in the MBA program, and the research instruments used were questionnaires. The statistical package utilized percentage, mean, and standard deviation for data analysis.

The results revealed that the sample group consisted of 40 MBA students, with 65 females representing 65.0 percent and 25 males representing 62.5 percent. Moreover, 21 participants were aged between 31 and 40 years old, and 39 respondents were employed, accounting for 52.5 percent of the sample. Additionally, 97.5 percent of participants financed their educational expenses through personal budgets, with 32 participants covering 80 percent of their expenses. The analysis demonstrated that the overall level of opinions regarding the factors influencing the graduation of Master's degree students in the MBA program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University was high, with an average score of 4.08. Further, the study found that faculty advisors played a crucial role, and this factor received the highest mean score. The three factors rated at a high level were curriculum management, personal attributes, and the graduation application process, with mean scores of 4.07, 3.95, and 3.93, respectively.

Keywords: Affecting factors , Graduate students, Completion of Studies.

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has spurred development in various dimensions, including technology, communication, economics, social and political aspects, and the potential of human resources. It is crucial for individuals to cultivate their knowledge and critical thinking abilities to tackle new challenges and situations. Education serves as a development tool to advance the population and the nation in achieving their goals. A highly educated population corresponds to highly efficient manpower. Nevertheless, obtaining educational opportunities in Thailand remains problematic due to economic, political, social, and educational system issues. Consequently, Thai education at various levels, including basic, tertiary, and graduate levels, encounters challenges that require resolution to establish educational standards and foster the potential of the country's personnel.

Pursuing a master's degree has become a prevalent option for individuals who aspire to advance their education. People choose their field of study according to their specific needs and the requirements of agencies and organizations to enhance their knowledge and work capacity. The Master of Business Administration Program operates under the Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, with a mission to produce quality graduates. The curriculum aligns with the standards of the Ministry of Education regarding the standard criteria for graduate programs of 2015. The program focuses on providing a quality learning environment and supporting graduates in completing their studies within a specified timeframe. Despite this, many factors hinder students from completing their studies as intended.

In relation to the trend of MBA students experiencing difficulty in completing their studies within the designated timeframe, it is imperative for academic support personnel, such as the researcher, to play a crucial role in steering the organization towards achieving its objectives. As a member of staff within the Master of Business Administration Program, the researcher is responsible for overseeing the academic progress of graduate, master's, and doctoral students. Therefore, it is essential to conduct research on the factors that impede graduation rates, in order to comprehend the underlying reasons and utilize the obtained data to develop an effective plan to resolve the issue. Furthermore, the outcomes of the study can serve as a blueprint for enhancing teaching and learning practices and the curriculum, to cater to the needs of the students. Additionally, it can enhance public relations and encourage prospective students to pursue graduate studies in the Master of Business Administration program. In this regard, the evaluation of personnel performance is deemed a crucial aspect of propelling the organization towards its objectives, by gauging success through performance Warangkana Kongsil and thanasuwit thabhiranrak, (2018).[1]

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To investigate the various factors that influence the graduation rates of Master of Business Administration (MBA) students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. History of the Master of Business Administration Program:

The Master of Business Administration Program is an organized entity situated within the Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, specifically located at the Srijutapa Building (Building 21). The program was initially offered in the academic year 2002, following the thorough research conducted by the curriculum team to evaluate the teaching and learning requirements and update the curriculum accordingly to adhere to modern academic standards. The curriculum received approval from the Office of the Higher Education Commission on August 16, 2018, and was recently updated again for the academic year 2021.

2. Management of Graduate Studies, Graduate Schools, and Universities at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat:

The management of graduate education, which encompasses tertiary education, is regulated under Section 10 of the Rajabhat University Act, 2004. The Act aims to facilitate local development, honor indigenous knowledge, and promote the creation of arts and sciences that contribute to sustainable and stable progress of the community, in compliance with the University Council's regulations. The Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University was founded in 2005 to provide graduate education, and it operates under the name "The Graduate School, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University" in English.

3. Concepts and Theories Affecting Graduation:

The term "graduation" refers to the completion of a student's study process in accordance with the study plan, number of credits, and graduation criteria outlined in Section 9 of the Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University Regulations on Graduate Studies, B.E. 2017. Anastasi (1967: 141-142) [2] posits that cognitive factors, such as accumulated experience, mental capacity, creative expertise, and problem-solving abilities, contribute significantly to academic success. Kanokwan Upa (2023) [3] suggests that practicing discipline in daily routines, including managing time for studying and working, and being determined to achieve one's goals can help in the successful completion of a student's academic mission.

RELATED RESEARCH

The present study seeks to review a set of research works that investigate the factors affecting the graduation of graduate students. In particular, Wassana Wongchana's (2016) [4] case study on the Master of Arts Program in Human and Social Development aimed to explore the reasons that cause overgraduation and suggest possible solutions. The study utilized a descriptive research report to analyze the causes of overgraduation beyond the specified period. The findings indicated that several factors contribute to the delay in graduation, such as the environment, students' work during their studies, education budget, advisor, unclear thesis process, and productivity that affects the study period.

Similarly, Nattawat Rojanawuthitham (2021) [5] conducted a quantitative research study on the factors affecting graduate students' graduation. The study used descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to analyze the general data of students and their

opinions regarding the factors that affect graduation. The results showed that all the five factors had a high level of opinions, with an average of 4.23.

Moreover, Tilkarat Khotsumat and Chanya Apipalkul (2012) [6] investigated the factors affecting the graduation time of graduate students at Khon Kaen University. The study utilized several statistical methods, such as frequency, percentage, average, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis. The overall results of the study showed that all five factors had a high level of impact on graduation time. However, the most problematic factor was the thesis advisor/independent study, followed by curriculum management, academic research resources service, thesis presentation, and the conduct of thesis/independent study, respectively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design that employs a purposive random sampling method to collect data through a questionnaire.

1. Population and Sample:

The sample population in this study was comprised of 40 graduate students enrolled in the Master of Business Administration Program.

2. Instrument:

The instrument employed in this study was a questionnaire consisting of two types of questions: closed-ended questions and questions that asked respondents to express their opinions. Specifically, the questionnaire pertained to the factors affecting the graduation of Master of Business Administration students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The questions are based on a rating scale based on Likert's model (R.A. Likert), wherein respondents are asked to answer at five levels, namely, most, high, medium, low, and least.

3. Data Collection:

Data was collected from Master of Business Administration students during the period from October 2022 to February 2023 using purposive sampling. The researcher identified two types of data sources: 1. Secondary Data, which comprises data obtained from studies, research results, articles, journals, theses, online newspapers, magazines, statistical data, reports, and information from the Internet, and 2. Primary Data, which was collected through the distribution of questionnaires. The researcher collected the questionnaires and verified their completeness for analysis.

4. Data Analysis:

The data was analyzed using a computer program that employed percentage, mean, and standard deviation statistics.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. The data collected from 40 respondents revealed that a majority of the students were female, with 25 respondents representing 62.5 percent, while 15 respondents (37.5 percent) were male. In terms of

age, the majority of the respondents fell in the age range of 31-40 years, accounting for 21 people (52.5 percent), followed by 12 people (30 percent) in the age range of 21-30 years and 7 people (17.5 percent) aged 41 years and above. Regarding the working status, 39 respondents (97.5 percent) reported that they were employed, while only one person (2.5 percent) was still unemployed. Concerning the payment of tuition fees, it was found that 32 respondents (80 percent) covered their expenses on their own, 6 people (15 percent) had their expenses paid by their parents, and 2 people (5 percent) received scholarships. This data is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Number and percentage of demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic characteristics	Number	Percentage
1. Gender		
Female	25	62.5
Male	15	37.5
Total	40	100.0
2. Age		
21- 30 years	12	30.0
31 - 40 years	21	52.5
41 years or more	7	17.5
Total	40	100.0
3. Working status		
Employed	39	97.5
Unemployed	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0
4. tuition fees		
On their own	32	80.0
Parents	6	15.0
Scholarships	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

2. The evaluation of opinions regarding the factors influencing graduation among Master's degree students in the Master of Business Administration program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University revealed an overall satisfaction level of 4.08. The analysis of the data, ranked from the highest to the lowest average score, showed that the advisor factor received the highest average score of 4.35, followed by curriculum management with an average score of 4.07. Personal attributes had an average score of 3.95, while the process related to applying for graduation received an average score of 3.93. Table 2 provides a detailed summary of these findings.

Table 2
The levels of opinions on factors affecting graduation

Factors Affecting Graduation	levels of opinions		
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	level
Personal Characteristics	3.95	.785	high
1. Responsibility in current position	4.17	.930	high
2. Consistency in seeking advice from consultants	3.80	1.114	high
3. Skills in data analysis and summarization of results	3.90	.955	high
Management Aspects of the Course	4.07	.745	high
1. Appropriate duration of study plan	4.12	.822	high
2. Suitable model of teaching and learning	4.07	.858	high
3. Management of curriculum staff	4.02	.973	high
Advisor	4.35	.662	the most
1. Knowledge and expertise in consulting	4.42	.675	the most
2. Appropriate allocation of time for student meetings and advice	4.30	.757	the most
3. Suitable review period for research	4.32	.693	the most
Process Related to Applying for Graduation	3.9.3	.773	high
1. Graduation criteria	4.02	.767	high
2. Guidelines for publishing thesis work	3.85	.863	high
3. Understanding of the graduation application process	4.05	.932	high
4. Appropriate timing for document verification	3.82	1.009	high
Total	4.08	.535	high

DISCUSSION

The study on the level of opinions regarding factors influencing the graduation of Master's degree students in the Master of Business Administration program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University revealed that the overall level of opinions was high. A more detailed examination of the various aspects indicated that faculty advisors received the highest rating, with the factor of advisors possessing knowledge and expertise in providing advice garnering an average score of 4.42. This finding corroborates the research conducted by Nattawat Rojanawutitham (2021), who explored the factors impacting graduate student graduation in five aspects. The overall rating was high, with an average of 4.23, and the highest average was recorded for the factor of achievement motivation at 4.42. This was followed by student characteristics with an average of 4.40, family and friends with an average of 4.30, thesis advisors with an average of 4.17, and facilities with an average of 3.87.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the curriculum focus on the selection and allocation of faculty advisors, along with mentoring, to ensure that they possess the knowledge and expertise in the field of study that matches the current changes. Furthermore, the development of faculty members' potential should be encouraged.

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