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Study of factors affecting the decision to study for a doctoral degree in the Doctor of Business Administration program in Logistics and Supply Chain Management.

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Abstract.

This study investigates the factors influencing the decision to pursue a doctoral degree in the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program specializing in Logistics and Supply Chain Management at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. A mixed methods research design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires from 100 prospective and current doctoral students, while qualitative data were obtained from in-depth interviews with 12 key informants, including faculty members, graduate students, and professionals in logistics-related fields. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis, whereas qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis.

The results reveal that personal motivation and curriculum flexibility have a significant positive influence on doctoral study decisions ($p < 0.05$), while tuition cost has a significant negative effect. Institutional reputation and faculty quality also contribute to decision-making, though to a lesser extent. Additionally, differences in motivation were observed across age and income groups, indicating the role of demographic characteristics in educational decision-making.

The qualitative findings support the quantitative results by highlighting the importance of flexible learning formats, research support, and career advancement opportunities for working professionals.

This study contributes empirical evidence to doctoral education decision-making in logistics and supply chain management and offers practical implications for the design and management of DBA programs to enhance accessibility and attractiveness for prospective students.

Keywords: Doctoral study decision; Doctor of Business Administration; Logistics and Supply Chain Management; Personal motivation; Curriculum flexibility

1. Introduction

Pursuing doctoral studies represents a significant academic and professional milestone, particularly in the field of logistics and supply chain management, which plays a crucial role in national and global economic development. Rapid technological advancement, globalization, and increasing competition have intensified the demand for professionals with advanced analytical capabilities, research competence, and strategic decision-making skills.

Previous empirical studies conducted at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University have demonstrated that doctoral programs in logistics and supply chain management contribute

significantly to the development of advanced research skills, critical thinking, and strategic competencies among working professionals (Thongbai-on & Krutthong, 2024). However, the decision to pursue doctoral studies is complex and influenced by multiple factors, including personal motivation, curriculum flexibility, financial considerations, institutional reputation, and social support.

Findings from the Doctor of Business Administration program in Logistics and Supply Chain Management at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University indicate that intrinsic motivation for self-development and the flexibility of program structure are among the most influential determinants of doctoral enrollment decisions, particularly for adult learners who must balance professional responsibilities with academic commitments (Thongbai-on & Krutthong, 2024). Despite the importance of these findings, empirical research focusing specifically on decision-making processes related to DBA programs in logistics and supply chain management remains limited.

Therefore, this study aims to systematically examine the factors influencing the decision to pursue a doctoral degree in the Doctor of Business Administration program in Logistics and Supply Chain Management at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, using a mixed methods research approach to provide comprehensive and context-specific insights.

1.1 Research Objectives

To study the factors influencing the decision to pursue a doctoral degree in the Doctor of Business Administration program in Logistics and Supply Chain Management. at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

1.2 Scope of Research

1.2.1 Population and Sample

The research sample will be individuals interested in pursuing a doctoral degree in Business Administration, specializing in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, as well as those who have previously studied at the master's level in related fields or those considering pursuing a doctoral degree in this field.

Data collection will cover both groups who have not yet decided to pursue further studies and those who have already commenced studies, in order to compare the factors influencing the decision of each group.

1.2.2 Content

This study will focus on exploring various factors that influence the decision to pursue a doctoral degree, especially in Logistics and Supply Chain Management. These factors include interest in the study, career opportunities, financial support, labor market demand, the attractiveness of the program, family and social support, and other factors that may affect the decision.

1.2.3 Time

The time frame for this study is “The study of factors influencing the decision to pursue a doctoral degree in Business Administration, specializing in Logistics and Supply Chain Management.” The study period will be from January to April 2024.

1.2.4 Location

College of Logistics and Supply Chain, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus

111/3-5 Moo 2, Khlong Yong Subdistrict, Phutthamonthon District, Nakhon Pathom 73170

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing decisions to pursue doctoral studies. A convergent mixed methods design was adopted, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same research period and analyzed separately, with results integrated at the interpretation stage to enhance validity and depth of explanation.

2.2 Population and Sample

The quantitative population consisted of individuals interested in pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, including prospective applicants and current doctoral students. A total of 100 respondents were selected using purposive sampling. For the qualitative component, 12 key informants were selected through purposive sampling, including faculty members, graduate students, government officials, and entrepreneurs with experience in logistics and supply chain management.

2.3 Research Instruments

The quantitative instrument was a structured questionnaire measuring seven factors influencing doctoral study decisions: (1) personal motivation, (2) academic interest, (3) suitability of study schedule, (4) financial support, (5) tuition fee appropriateness, (6) research and dissertation interest, and (7) institutional factors. The qualitative instrument was a semi-structured interview guide focusing on motivations, program expectations, financial considerations, and perceptions of institutional credibility.

2.4 Instrument Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the questionnaire was assessed by three experts using the Index of Objective Congruence (IOC), with all items achieving values above 0.70. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.75, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

2.5 Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected through online and paper-based questionnaires. Qualitative data were collected through formal and informal interviews conducted in person and via telephone.

2.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis to identify significant predictors of doctoral study decisions. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings from both methods were integrated during interpretation to triangulate results.

3. Results and Discussion

Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis indicated that all seven factors were rated at a high level. Multiple regression analysis revealed that personal motivation and curriculum flexibility had the strongest positive effects on the decision to pursue doctoral studies ($p < 0.05$). In contrast, tuition cost demonstrated a significant negative influence on decision-making. Institutional reputation and faculty quality also contributed positively, though with lower effect sizes.

Differences in motivation levels were observed across age and income groups, suggesting that demographic characteristics play a moderating role in doctoral enrollment decisions.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative results. Interviewees emphasized intrinsic motivation, career advancement, and research competency as primary drivers of doctoral study decisions. Flexibility in course scheduling and learning formats was highlighted as essential for working professionals. Financial constraints were frequently cited as a major barrier, particularly among early-career and mid-income participants.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that personal motivation and curriculum flexibility are the most influential factors affecting the decision to pursue doctoral studies in logistics and supply chain management. These results are consistent with the empirical evidence obtained from the same institutional context, which highlights intrinsic motivation and flexible learning structures as key determinants for working professionals enrolling in DBA programs (Thongbai-on & Krutthong, 2024).

The strong influence of personal motivation supports Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes intrinsic drivers such as competence, autonomy, and self-development. In the context of this study, respondents reported career advancement, academic aspiration, and professional recognition as primary motivations, reinforcing the importance of intrinsic factors in doctoral decision-making.

Furthermore, curriculum flexibility emerged as a critical factor, aligning with Adult Learning Theory proposed by Knowles et al. (2015). The findings suggest that DBA programs designed for logistics professionals must accommodate work–study balance through flexible scheduling, blended learning formats, and applied research approaches. Similar conclusions were observed in prior institutional research conducted at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, confirming the consistency and reliability of these results (Thongbai-on & Krutthong, 2024).

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that decisions to pursue doctoral studies in the Doctor of Business Administration program in Logistics and Supply Chain Management are shaped by an interaction of motivational, academic, financial, and demographic factors. Among these, personal motivation emerged as the most influential determinant, underscoring the importance of intrinsic drivers such as career advancement, academic aspiration, and personal development. This result is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and self-growth as central motivations for long-term educational commitment (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Curriculum flexibility was identified as the second most significant factor, particularly for working professionals. This finding aligns with Adult Learning Theory, which highlights that adult learners prefer learning environments that are flexible, practical, and compatible with professional and personal responsibilities (Knowles et al., 2015). The demand for adaptable learning formats reflects the contemporary context of doctoral education, where most students are employed full-time and require programs that effectively support work–study balance.

Financial considerations, especially tuition costs, were found to exert a significant negative influence on doctoral study decisions. In line with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), respondents appeared to evaluate doctoral education as an investment, weighing expected benefits against financial costs. High tuition fees may therefore function as a barrier, particularly for middle- and lower-income learners, highlighting the importance of scholarships, financial aid, and flexible payment schemes in improving access to doctoral education.

Additionally, demographic characteristics such as age and income were found to influence motivation and institutional choice, reflecting the relevance of Rational Choice Theory in educational decision-making (Scott, 2000). Younger individuals tended to be more influenced by family and social support, whereas older respondents prioritized career advancement and program suitability. Although social support factors were not dominant overall, their moderate influence suggests that social context remains an important consideration, particularly for early-career learners.

Overall, this study confirms that doctoral enrollment decisions are multifaceted and context-dependent. The findings are consistent with prior empirical evidence derived from the same institutional setting, reinforcing the reliability of the results and emphasizing the importance of doctoral program designs that align with learner motivations, adult learning principles, and financial accessibility (Thongbai-on & Krutthong, 2024). These insights offer valuable implications for higher education institutions seeking to enhance the attractiveness, accessibility, and effectiveness of DBA programs in logistics and supply chain management.

5. Suggestions

5.1 Policy and Management Recommendations

Higher education institutions should develop and promote highly flexible Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programs, such as weekend classes, blended learning, or hybrid learning formats, to accommodate working professionals.

Appropriate financial support mechanisms, including scholarships and flexible payment plans, should be provided to reduce financial barriers, particularly for middle- to low-income students.

Faculty members should be encouraged to actively conduct research and establish collaborative networks with the business sector in order to enhance academic quality and program credibility.

Tuition fees and payment conditions should be clearly defined and transparent, with options such as semester-based or installment payments to support student financial planning.

To support dissertation writing and independent research, institutions should provide adequate research facilities, databases, and academic resources with convenient access for students.

Policy planning and evaluation should consider expanding data collection and benchmarking across both public and private universities nationwide to ensure broader program relevance.

5.2 Recommendations for Prospective Students

1. Prospective students should carefully assess their personal motivations, including career goals, professional development plans, and intended use of the doctoral degree.
2. Students should thoroughly review program information, including curriculum structure, faculty expertise, tuition costs, learning formats, and expected career outcomes, before making enrollment decisions.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies should examine additional influencing factors, such as the impact of artificial intelligence technologies, digital transformation, and economic conditions, on decisions to pursue doctoral studies.

Qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, should be employed to gain deeper insights into learners' motivations and decision-making processes.

The sample population should be expanded to include doctoral students from both public and private universities across different regions to enhance the generalizability of findings.

Future research should incorporate perspectives from additional stakeholders, such as employers of doctoral graduates, to support curriculum development that better aligns with labor market and industry needs.

Institution-specific studies may be conducted to examine motivations for pursuing graduate studies at particular universities, enabling more targeted curriculum design and strategic planning.

5.4 Suggestions for Program Improvement

Course content should be systematically integrated and aligned with the policies of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation to ensure national policy relevance.

Courses should be scheduled primarily on weekends, as most prospective doctoral students are employed in government agencies or educational institutions.

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