

**UNIVERSITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS'
COMPLETION RATES IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN UGANDA:
A CASE OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY, MUKONO**

BY

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NOVEMBER, 2019

DECLARATION

I declare that information contained in this dissertation is original as a result of my independent investigation and has not been presented for any other degree award to any other University and or Institution before. All the other works consulted are dully acknowledged under references.

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation titled “University Learning Environment and postgraduate students’ completion rates in Private Universities, a case of Uganda Christian University, Mukono” carried out by Nassimbwa Winfred, under our supervision is submitted to Kyambogo University graduate school for examination.

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DEDICATION

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DOSA: Directorate of Student Affairs

ESA: Education Standards Agency

NCHE: National Council for Higher Education

SPSS: Statistical Packages for Social Scientists

USA: United States of America

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of University physical environment, staff diversity, and students' factors on the completion of postgraduate students at Uganda Christian University- Mukono. Specifically, the study sought to examine the extent to which graduate students' completion is affected by; University physical environment, University staff diversity, and University graduate students' factors. The study adopted a cross-sectional design to gather data from a sample of the population at a particular time in order to obtain information about opinions, attitudes, practices, concerns or interests of groups of people. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for the mutual validation of the data following a descriptive approach. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the results were presented in form percentages and frequencies in tables with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) Computer Program version 21.0 whilst qualitative data were analyzed was presented by way of verbatim quotations. From the analyses it was established that physical environment aspects such as; spacious well equipped and adequately sized lecture rooms, and aspects of staff diversity such as; level of qualification, experience and affect graduate students' completion at UCU to some extent, whereas students' factors such as; Job commitment, financial challenges affect students completion to a larger extent. Basing on these findings, it was concluded that, at UCU students' completion is not affected by the physical environment and staff diversity. Instead students' factors affect graduate studies completion to a large extent. It is recommended that; the University administrators should ensure that they not only provide physical facilities, but also emphasis should also be placed on proper use of these facilities to facilitate students' completion, on top of having diverse teaching and management staff. There is need to specifically address research needs of graduate students.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This study explored the University learning Environment and postgraduate students' completion rates to advance knowledge on what contributes to students' inability to complete studies in a mandatory study period at Uganda Christian University-Mukono. Under this chapter, the background to the study (historical, theoretical, conceptual & contextual background), the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the objectives, research questions, scope, significance of the study, conceptual framework and definition of key terms is presented.

1.1.1 Historical Perspective

Every educational Institution has an Environment that distinguishes it from others which influences behavior and actions of its staff and students and consequently affecting the ability of the institution to achieve its core objectives (Muya & Wesonga, 2012). The term "Learning Environment" is used to refer to the physical set up as well as the composition of the inhabitants of the organization including management staff and other individuals that determine the "social Environment" within the clubs, which in turn led to particular behavior displayed by the students (Kurt (1939). The social context of the work environment, termed "atmosphere," was discussed as early as 1910 and during the 1930s in Britain (Kwaitkowski, Duncan & Shimmin, 2006) cited by Cheri, Angelo & Rabiah (2013). Environment was formally introduced in the 1960s, primarily on the basis of theoretical concepts proposed by Kurt Lewin and followed by empirical research. Schneider et al (2011a) noted that in 1970s, organizational Environment which began as a field of organizational culture

began to explode. Organizational culture did not become a popular issue for study in the management literature until the 1980s. Although in the 1990s another transition took place, and interest in organizational Environment appeared to have eclipsed the focus on organizational culture in more recent years. The turn of the century (2000–2012), organizational Environment or organizational culture, focused on aggregate constructs (as opposed to individual perceptions, preferences, or beliefs), such as organizational processes and outcomes and has indicated specific practices and behaviors that serve as interventions in organizations to enhance performance in those areas (Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2007). Further, the continued study of culture and Environment is important because these constructs provide a context for studying organizational behavior. That is, the social and symbolic processes associated with organizational culture and Environment which influence both individual and group behaviors, including turnover, job satisfaction, job performance, citizenship, safety, customer satisfaction, service quality, and organizational level indicators of effectiveness (Schneider et al, 2011a).

Zohar & Hofmann (2012) clarify the distinction between molar Environment and focused Environment, here is what might have been a typical generic Environment item followed by the strategically focused version of the item: “My supervisor says a good word whenever he sees a job well done” cited in Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey, (2013p.365) “My supervisor says a good word whenever he sees a job done according to the safety rules” (Zohar, 2000; pg. 587-96). Schneider et al. (2009) showed that institutions with higher levels of service Environment had higher customer satisfaction and subsequently superior financial performance. Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013) noted that service Environment includes organizational resources and unit-level engagement as well as high performance work practices. They add that; indeed, it is reasonable to suggest that any and all organizational processes might be usefully studied and understood.

1.1.2 Theoretical Perspective

The study was guided by two theories that is, the field theory of behavior as coined by Kurt (1939) and the New Institutionalism theory. This is because of the deviance in the variables whereby the patterns of interaction within the individual behavior is psychological which can be well explained by the field theory and yet the aspect of institution's environment interaction /influence can well be explained by the New Institutionalism theory. Field theory is a psychological theory which examines patterns of interactions between the individual and the total field, or environment. Lewin's field theory can be expressed by a formula; $B = f(p,e)$, meaning that behavior (B) is a function of the person (p) and his/her environment (e). The field theory helps to understand how particular social groupings are formed, motivated and maintained. Therefore, in order to understand, predict and begin to change a person's behavior, it is necessary to take into account everything about the person and his/her perceptual or psychological environment that defines the person's life space (Burnes & Bill, 2012).

Field theory assumes that an individual or group is able to map out and understand the totality and complexity of the life space in which their behavior takes place, and appreciate how the forces that comprise their life space can be changed or reinterpreted in order to modify their own behavior. Consequently, for Lewin, change was a learning process; he believed that successful behavioral change could only be achieved if individuals and groups could be helped to understand and reflect on the forces that impinge on their lives (Wheeler, 2008 p. 1640).

New Institutionalism asserts that institutions operate in an open environment consisting of other institutions, called the institutional environment. Every institution is influenced by the broader environment (or in simpler terms institutional peer pressure). In this environment, the main goal of organizations is to survive and gain legitimacy. In order to do so, they need to do more than succeed economically; they need to establish legitimacy within the world of institutions. Much of the

research within New Institutionalism deals with the pervasive influence of institutions on human behavior through rules, norms, and other frameworks.

An important contribution of new institutionalism was to add a cognitive type influence. This perspective adds that, instead of acting under rules or based on obligation, individuals act because of conceptions. “Compliance occurs in many circumstances because other types of behavior are inconceivable; routines are followed because they are taken for granted as 'the way we do these things” (Scott, 2001:57), also called Social Institutionalism. Individuals make certain choices or perform certain actions not because they fear punishment or attempt to conform; neither do they do so because an action is appropriate or the individual feels some sort of social obligation. Instead, the cognitive element of new institutionalism suggests that individuals make certain choices because they conceive no alternatives.

1.1.3 Conceptual Perspective

According to Selamat, Zahira et al. (2013) organizational Environment is an approach in which organizational members observe and characterize their surrounding environment in an attitudinal and value-based manner. Cohen, McCabe & Michelli (2009) reveal that School Environment is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. School Environment is used to refer to lecturers’ perception of the present context in which they carry out their day-to-day activities in learning institutions like Universities (Optic, 2013). To Adejumobi & Rasheed (2013), it refers to lecturers’ perceptions of the general work environment of the University’s formal organization, informal organization, personalities of participants, and organizational leadership. Organizational Environment may be defined as the shared perceptions and the meaning attached to the policies, practices and procedures employees experience and the

behaviors they observe getting rewarded and supported. Furthermore, organizational Environment can be perceived as the meanings people attach to interrelated bundles of experiences they have at work. On the other hand, organizational culture is seen as the shared basic assumptions, values, and beliefs that characterize a setting and are taught to newcomers as the proper way to think and feel, communicated by the myths and stories people tell about how the organization came to be the way it is as it solved problems associated with external adaptation and internal integration (Schein, 2010). A historical review of the Environment and culture literatures, however, reveals that culture recently has been much more often studied using surveys, and the issues addressed can both overlap and be considerably different from the issues addressed via Environment surveys (Schneider et al. 2011, Zohar & Hofmann 2012).

Completion of education on the other hand refers to the ability of students to finish a study program for which they have been admitted for within the mandatory course schedule. Vidak et al. (2012) defines it as the outcome of how many students within a cohort complete and or graduate from an institution which is typically measured in terms of the course tenure. Not completing a program on time increases the cost of doing it due to the hidden costs which are always incurred by both the students and the University. For instance, students are charged extension fees, while University's resources like libraries and research supervisors become overused due to the backlog of students who must be cleared to be able to graduate (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Many stakeholders have attached delay in completion of undergraduate courses to retaking course unit as it influences one's ability to complete the program. In many cases, however, students and University management do not give it much attention. Completion reflects on the overall quality of student learning and intellectual involvement.

1.1.4 Contextual Perspective

Uganda Christian University was founded in 1997 by the Anglican Church of Uganda from its premier theological seminary/college; Bishop Tucker Theological College, which was established in 1913 and named after the pioneer missionary bishop Alfred Robert Tucker. Bishop Tucker Theological College trained clergy and educators during its 84-year history from 1913-1997. The local chief, Hamu Mukasa, granted land for the college to operate in Mukono. By the late 1990s, the Church of Uganda sought to have a broader impact on society through the higher education - not only of clergy but of other professionals as well. The University offers a number of graduate programs leading to the award of PhDs, Masters, and post graduate Diplomas, which are designed to develop a cadre of professionals with integrity, power of critical inquiry, logical thought and independent judgment with a Christian perspective. The programs are offered in three intakes of September, January and May Semesters (Uganda Christian University website; ucu.ac.ug). According to the Academic Registrar's register (2016), the University number of postgraduate students in the School of Research & Postgraduate Studies, however, by the time of graduation, very few students make it through.

This means that, despite the existing frameworks, the numbers of students who complete their studies within the stipulated course duration is low and this seems to be the trend year after year thus affecting the University's dream of becoming the center for academic excellence. It was however unclear as to whether the institution's learning facilities, infrastructure, staff and students' traits have a role to play in as far as students' completion is concerned. It was against this background that the researcher was compelled to conduct a study to investigate the effect of learning Environment on Postgraduate students' completion rates at Uganda Christian University-Mukono.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A conducive learning Environment supports students to achieve their educational goals within the stipulated course time (Ebrahim & Mohamad Khani, 2014). Students' completion rates at Uganda Christian University Mukono have remained low (at 38%) compared to the number that is enrolled in the programs (Academic Registrar's Report, 2016). Of particular interest is the completion rate for post graduate students which have become one of the most pressing issues facing the University, just like in any other, but more so a private University in Uganda, despite efforts to address this matter through developing of various frameworks, solicitation of external funding to address space and welfare issues, Grant support and amnesty program for students deemed to have been discontinued due to failure to complete within the stipulate time. One is left to wonder whether low completion rate of graduate students is due to the organizational Environment of the University, being characterized by inadequate information and technology facilities, lack of lecture theatres and personal study rooms, workshops and sufficient libraries, inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of interpersonal skills, inadequate support programs, among others, leading to inability by the students to match the study programs' requirements. Creighton (2005) asserts that low graduation rates drain Universities scarce resources, weaken their ability to meet educational objectives, and reflect the University's inability to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of students thus ruining the institutions' reputation. It was against such a background that the researcher sought to undertake a study to examine the effects of learning environment on postgraduate students' completion rates at Uganda Christian University in Mukono.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the University learning environment on postgraduate students' completion rates at Uganda Christian University Mukono.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are;

1. To assess the extent to which University physical environment/university infrastructure affects postgraduate students' completion at Uganda Christian University Mukono.
2. To examine the extent to which University staff diversity affects postgraduate students' completion rate at Uganda Christian University Mukono.
3. To examine the effect of students' factors on the completion rate of post graduate students at Uganda Christian University Mukono.

1.5 Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following research questions

1. What is the effect of University physical environment on postgraduate students' completion rates at Uganda Christian University Mukono?
2. What is the effect of University staff diversity on postgraduate students' completion rates at Uganda Christian University Mukono?
3. What is the effect of the University students' factors on post graduate students' completion rates at Uganda Christian University Mukono?

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Content Scope

The study focused on examining Learning Environment in terms of physical facilities, staff diversity and students' factors on postgraduate students' completion rates in Uganda Christian University Mukono, a private University in Uganda that served as a representation of the private Universities in the country. The University is selected on the fact that it is one of the leading private Universities in Uganda, having been in operation for a considerably long time period. Learning Environment is conceived as the independent variable while completion rates as the dependent variable.

1.6.2 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted at Uganda Christian University's main campus-Mukono that has about 8,000 students. The University is located in Mukono, approximately ½ km off Kampala-Jinja highway and about 22 kilometers (14 miles), by road, from Uganda's capital city-Kampala in the East.

1.6.3 Time Scope

The study covered data on admission and graduation periods of postgraduate students for the past consecutive 5years intake and graduations (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017).

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study helped to identify the effect of University Learning Environment on postgraduate students' completion rates at UCU and may be beneficial to a number of persons and entities in the following ways:

The study may help decision and policy makers in Private Universities, Ministry of Education, and Sports, NCHE and Education Standards Agency (ESA) come up with new policies and standards for maximizing postgraduate students' completion rates in private Universities and the general education sector. The findings from this study may also be used as reference material by other researchers in this area of study to stimulate further research. The study may add value to the body of existing knowledge and lead to ventures in further research thus it may contribute especially to the existing literature on how the Learning Environment can affect completion rates of postgraduate students in Private Universities and the general education sector.

Through the resultant interaction between the researcher and the respondents, the researcher's knowledge, skills and understanding of research ought to improve.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this study shows the interrelationship between the University Learning Environment and post graduate students' completion rates. The University physical environment such as infrastructure, lecture rooms, laboratories, multi-purpose halls and facilities like internet, furniture and sanitation; staff diversity in terms of qualification, their research publications, experience, and commitment; and students' personal characteristics like student related factors employment status, financial abilities, personal commitment to the study programs, cooperation

with other students, are the constructs likely to determine postgraduate students' completion rates in terms of graduating within the mandatory period undertaken in any course unit. The conceptual frame work is shown in Figure 1 below.

However, the extraneous variables such as economic status of students' families, social obligations, internal and external post graduate education policy may influence students' completion rates. The researcher did not include extraneous variables in questionnaires and interview guide and by so doing their effect on the study was controlled.

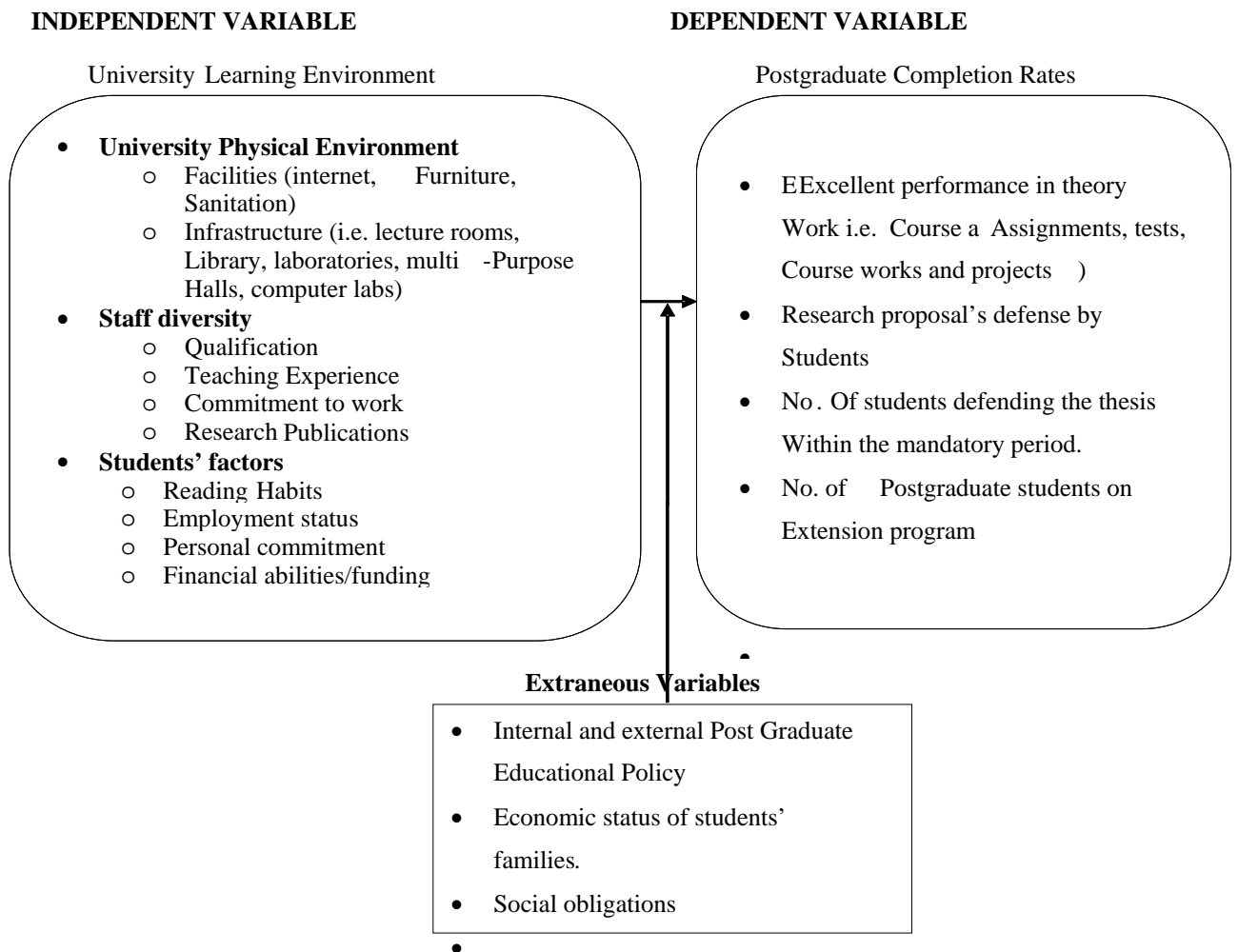


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework

Source: Adapted from Ebrahim & Mohamadkhani (2014) and modified by the researcher

1.9 Definitions of operational key terms

Postgraduate students' completion rates in this study was used to refer to the proportion of the students who complete a course of study within the mandatory course schedule compared to students registered for the course at its commencement.

University Learning Environment in this study refers to the perceived conditions facilities and personnel within the University campus that directly or indirectly influence the learning process of the students.

Staff diversity is the collectivity of staff characteristics that form the basis of one's resultant action and level of output in supporting a student academically.

Student's factors in this study referred to students' patterns of actions exhibited as a response to a given parameters at the campus.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a theoretical review and review of literature related to learning environment and students' completion rates. The literature was reviewed under the sub-headings guided by the study objectives mentioned in chapter one.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was grounded on two theories, that is, the Field theory and New Institutionalism theory as explained below.

2.1.1 Field Theory

Field theory is a psychological theory which examines patterns of interaction between the individuals and the total field-environment. The concept first made its appearance in psychology with roots to the holistic perspective of Gestalt theories. The concept was developed by Kurt Lewin, a Gestalt psychologist, in the 1940s. Lewin's field theory can be expressed by a formula: $B = f(p,e)$, meaning that behavior (B) is a function of the person (p) and his/her environment (e) (Burnes, Cooke & Bill, 2012). The environment as demonstrated in the life space refers to the objective situation in which the person perceives and acts. The life space environment (E) is completely subjective within each context as it depends not only on the objective situation, but also on the characteristics of the person (P), (Sundberg & Norman, 2001). It is necessary to consider all aspects of a person's conscious and unconscious environment in order to map out the person's life space. The combined state, influenced by the environment as well as the person's perspective,

conscious, or unconscious or both, must be considered in totality. While each aspect can be viewed as a distinct entity, to observe the totality of the situation one must take all inputs into consideration (Burnes, Bernard; Cooke, Bill, 2012).

According to Smith (2001), Kurt Lewin, behavior was determined by totality of an individual's situation. In his field theory, a field is defined as the totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent (Lewin 1951: 240). Individuals were seen to behave differently according to the way in which tensions between perceptions of the self and of the environment were worked through. The whole psychological field, or life space, within which people acted, had to be viewed, in order to understand behavior. Within this individuals and groups could be seen in topological terms (using map-like representations). Individuals participate in a series of life spaces (such as the family, work, University and church), and these were constructed under the influence of various force vectors (Tognotti, 2008). Sundberg (2001) states that; Lewin viewed the social environment as a dynamic field which impacted in an interactive way with human consciousness. In turn, the person's psychological state influences the social field or milieu. Smith (2001) states that the field theory may seem obvious to us now, but most early psychologists did not believe in behaviorism. Many psychologists at the time believed in the psychoanalytic theory that held human motives to be blind pushes from within. Lewin thought of motives as goal-directed forces. He believed "that our behavior is purposeful; we live in a psychological reality or life space that includes not only those parts of our physical and social environment that are important to us but also imagined states that do not currently exist".

From the point of view of Cognitive-Field Psychology, a person learns through differentiating, generalizing, and restructuring his person and his psychological environment in such a way that he

acquires new or changed insights of meanings, and achieves changes in motivation, grasps belongingness, time perspective, and ideology, and gains control of himself and his world.

Applied to the University situations, each lecturer and each student is conceived as a person within his psychological environment. The lecturer's function is to help students develop insights toward the attainment of adequate and harmonious personalities. This calls for a thorough understanding of the nature of the learner, his psychological field, the dynamic properties of his space, and the barriers to his goal. The lecturer's life space should intersect with the students' life space. To ensure a thorough understanding of the student, the lecturer should go further; he has to perceive the student and his environment as the student sees himself. In so doing, he gains the confidence of the student and rapport between them is established. Thus, the barrier to communication is removed and learning is facilitated (Smith, 2001).

2.1.2 New Institutionalism theory

New institutionalism or neo-institutionalism is a theory that focuses on developing a sociological view of institutions, the way they interact and the way they affect society (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:13). The theory was propagated by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). It provides a way of viewing institutions outside of the traditional views of economics by explaining why and how institutions emerge in a certain way within a given context. One of the institution's view that has emerged argue that institutions have developed to become similar (showing an isomorphism) across organizations even though they evolved in different ways, and has studied how institutions shape the behavior of agents i.e. people, organizations, governments (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:11).

New institutionalism postulates that institutions operate in an open environment consisting of other institutions, called institutional environment. Every institution is influenced by the broader

environment (institutional peer pressure). In this environment, the main goal of organizations is to survive and gain legitimacy. In order to do so, they need to do more than succeed economically; they need to establish legitimacy within the world of institutions (Schmidt, 2010). Much of the research within New Institutionalism deals with the pervasive influence of institutions on human behavior through rules, norms, and other frameworks. An important contribution of new institutionalism was to add a cognitive type influence. This perspective adds that, instead of acting under rules or based on obligation, individuals act because of conceptions. "Compliance occurs in many circumstances because other types of behavior are inconceivable; routines are followed because they are taken for granted as 'the way we do these things'" (Scott, 2001:57) also called Social Institutionalism.

Individuals make certain choices or perform certain actions not because they fear punishment or attempt to conform; neither do they do so because an action is appropriate or the individual feels some sort of social obligation. Instead, the cognitive element of new institutionalism suggests that individuals make certain choices because they can conceive of no alternative. In line with the new institutionalism, social rule system theory stresses that particular institutions and their organizational instantiations are deeply embedded in cultural, social, and political environments and that particular structures and practices are often a reflection as well as responses to rules, laws, conventions, paradigms built into the wider environment (Powell, 2007:30).

To be sure, organizations and organizational fields are shaped by different combinations of these elements, varying among one another as well as over time. A key analytical task for institutional analysis is to ascertain which factors are important in particular contexts and the extent to which the mechanisms work to reinforce the prevailing social order or undercut one another. Each of DiMaggio and Powell (1983)'s pillars offered a different rationale for legitimacy, either by virtue of

being legally sanctioned, morally authorized, or culturally supported. These two key treatments of institutional mechanisms underscored that it is critical to distinguish whether an organization complies out of expedience, from a moral obligation, or because its members cannot conceive of alternative ways of acting (Scott, 2001:45).

The theory draws attention on how organizations decision making process is influenced by the institutional, social and cultural factors as identified by Scott (2001:32), and in particular how rationalized activities are adopted by organizations. The theory emphasizes the use of rules, laws policies, processes and sanctions as enforcement mechanism, with expedience as basis for compliance (Scott, 2004:23). When applied, this theory explains how rules can best be applied in an institution and the effect of institutional decision making in bringing about reforms and the influence of the regulatory framework in influencing performance (Scott, 2004). The institutional theory helped in showing the relevance of structures, processes and systems (Thornton, 2004). Nevertheless, the idea that homogenizes pressures exerted on similar influences throughout an organizational field was questioned by many. Debates also ensued over the sources of institutional pressures, most notably: Where do rational myths come from? How do practices travel and circulate? What are the primary sources of legitimacy? This new attention to institutional change sparked fertile research, addressing how changes in rules, normative systems, and cognitive beliefs reshape organizational fields Lowndes (2010).

2.2 Related Literature

2.2.1 University Physical Environment and Student completion rate

According to Olufunke & Lubunmi (2016), physical facilities in an Organizational environment refer to the movable and immovable objects in institution that bring comfort to the learner. They include lecture/study rooms, laboratories, libraries, offices, toilets, sitting facilities etc. In a

University environment physical facility refers to the University plant, that is, the University buildings, lecture rooms, library, laboratories, workshops, sanitation facilities, offices, cafeterias, information and communication technology and teaching materials and infrastructure that is likely to motivate students towards learning. Physical facilities are relevant to effective learning and academic performance of students. Torupere (2016), identified facilities as the main learning environment or factors that contribute to academic achievements in the University system. They include the University buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories and recreational facilities/equipment among others. Santhya, Zavier & Shireen (2014) point out that availability of material inputs such facilities, instructional materials, teaching staff, sanitary facilities, electricity and water have profound implication on the comfort of students and the attractiveness of a University. Bowers & Burkett (2007) and Chan (2009) argue that institutional environment infrastructure shared by male and female students such as toilets and shelter may have differential implications for girls in terms of enrollment and attendance because of their special needs during their menstrual periods and vulnerability to sexual harassment which provides grounds for dropout of school. The researcher agrees with the author because girls need extra care and support from a school by providing these facilities. When these facilities are not provided, females can become demoralized and lose hope in studying which affect completion rate.

Jago & Tanner (2012) argue that class size is one of the most important infrastructures in the institutional environment because it helps to identify the student's teacher ratio. Teacher-student ratio is a variable that gives an indicator on the average of a class in an institutional setting. Demaris & Kristsonis (2008) reports that the class room may become the only place where students and faculty meet, where education in the formal sense is experienced. Abiodun (2008) reports that tertiary institutions don't put into consideration the number of students admitted whether the number is commensurate to the existing facilities or not. In this study, the researcher intended to

focus on the admission policy in regard to lecturer/ student ratio vis-à-vis the available facilities and other resources.

Olufunke & Olubunmi (2016) stated that the physical facilities in the University setting go a long way to motivate students to learn. Physical facilities in any University system range from the University plant, including University buildings, classroom, library, laboratories, toilet facilities, learning materials to other infrastructures that would likely motivate students towards learning. But we still continue to observe failures even in the well facilitated institution, what is then missing to guarantee maximum completion rates.

Andisi and Mege (2014) stated that physical facilities are relevant to effective learning hence success of students appear not to be sufficient in most Universities today due to lack of such facilities. Those available seem not to be of standard quality; some seem to lack maintenance and are in dilapidated conditions. The status of physical facilities especially in private Universities today appears to be of great concern to educators. It seems that the provision of such crucial learning facilities has dwindled over the years, perhaps due to increase in secondary school enrolment rate which led to population explosion in private Universities. Since it has been observed that University physical facilities are essential learning stimulators, can Universities solely base on physical facilities to achieve maximum completion? What could be the other compelling factors that bolster completion rates in private Universities University physical facility in an ideal working environment attracts and motivates lecturers?

Students 'completion/ success in Universities perhaps could be related to lack of physical facilities and a motivating learning Environment (Caroline, 2014). Most Universities seem to lack the necessary facilities that could enhance completion rates. As a result, little is expected from students in terms of academic performance. Experience shows that inadequate physical facilities have some

adverse effect on students' interest to learn. Hence, this may invariably affect their academic performance. In a situation where students are not having access to normal facilities like library equipment and inadequate seats in the lecture rooms it is observed that these could contribute to low completion rates due poor performance of students. Apart from protecting students from sun, rain, heat and cold, there should be enough space, seats, laboratory and internet facilities and a host of other physical facilities that could enhance the level of motivation and academic performance of students.

Abiodun (2008) emphasized that availability of facilities is quite important to achieving effectiveness in instructional delivery and supervision in the University system. They further buttressed the fact that non-availability of basic facilities such as classrooms, offices, accommodation, workshops, sporting facilities, laboratories, library et cetera which is being experienced in schools is a perfect reflection of what takes place in the University system. Qaiser and Ishtiaq (2014) claimed that laboratories play a key role in the teaching and learning of science and that is why Fisher (2008) noted that these facilities have to be adequate and should be in good condition for schools to function properly.

In support of the above Likoko, Mutsotso, & Nasongo (2013), said that well sited University buildings with aesthetic conditions, laboratory and playground often contribute to improved performance in the University system. He also argued that the availability of University building and other plant facilities are very important as they could enhance effective teaching and learning. Likoko, Mutsotso & Nasongo (2013); were of the view that adequate facilities are essential for academic work. Also, in support of this Ogundele & Moronfoye (2013) affirmed that for effective teaching to take place in any educational setting there must be provision of adequate and quality physical facilities. Allen (2015) viewed the availability of adequate number of physical facilities

had significant influence on student's academic performance. He further emphasized that adequate number of physical facilities should be provided to Universities to guarantee performance. Lawanson & Gede (2011) in his study observed that inadequate provision of University resources has been a major factor of poor student's academic performance. He equally remarked that without adequate physical resources/facilities there would be a continuous decline in student's academic performance. In support of this view, Ololube (2013) emphasized the need for the availability of physical materials in the University system to boost Student Completion Rate. This would, invariably, enhance students' academic performance. In a related study carried out by Xaba, (2012) cited in Olufunke and Olubunmi (2016), revealed that adequate provision and maintenance of University plant is a remedy for any academic encumbrance.

This means that running the University system without adequate provision and maintenance of University plant can be very cumbersome for lecturers. In support of this still, Yusuf, (2008) also maintained that the provision and maintenance of physical facilities such as building, laboratories, libraries, furniture, equipment, et cetera, are very important for effective and efficient University administration and better academic performance (on the part of students). Owoeye, & Yara (2010) revealed that although facilities were adequately provided in some schools, they were not effectively utilized. He further emphasized on the need to ensure effective and efficient realization of the goals and objectives of the educational system. This implies that the availability of physical facilities alone does not enhance learning; rather it is the adequate utilization of these facilities that can only motivate students to learn and enhance their academic performance.

Odeh, Oguche, Ivagher & Dondo (2015) reveal that University environment which includes instructional spaces planning, administrative places, circulation spaces planning, spaces for conveniences planning, accessories planning, the lecturers as well as the students themselves are

essential in teaching-learning process. The extent to which student learning could be enhanced depends on their location within the University compound, the structure of their classroom, availability of instructional facilities and accessories. Cherastidtham & Notorn (2018) argues that, location of the campus affects students since they may have to travel long distances, wasting time. They further state that students who commute to collage fail to catch up with their studies. It is believed that a well-planned University gear up expected outcomes of education that facilitate good social, political and economic emancipation, effective teaching and learning process and academic performance of the students. Relating to the above, Edogi (2014), reported that safe and orderly classroom environment (aspect of instructional space), University facilities (accessories) were significantly related to students' academic performance in schools. The physical characteristics of the University have a variety of effects on lecturers, students, and the learning process. Poor lighting, noise, high levels of carbon dioxide in classrooms, and inconsistent temperatures make teaching and learning difficult. Poor maintenance and ineffective ventilation systems lead to poor health among students as well as lecturers, which leads to poor performance and higher absentee rates (Omotere, Tope, Omotere & Adunola, 2016). These factors can adversely affect student behavior and lead to higher levels of frustration among lecturers, and poor learning attitude among student.

According to Andisi and Mege (2014) University facilities like buildings, classroom, accommodation, libraries, laboratories, furniture, recreational equipment, apparatus and other instructional materials contribute positively towards students' achievement. He went further to say that their availability, relevance and adequacy contribute to academic achievement of students. He however, quickly added that unattractive University buildings and overcrowded classrooms among others contribute to poor academic achievement of the students. Andisi et al. (2014), advance that

physical facilities in terms of adequacy and quality have been noted to have great impact on performance of students in examination.

In their study on effect of availability of physical facilities on academic performance found out that presence of University library related significantly to achievement in Brazil, China, Botswana and Uganda. Torupere (2016) agree that University environment such as; classrooms, desks and books have a direct impact on good performance among the students in developing countries. Classrooms are a place where students spend the greatest part of their day. Dahar & Faize (2011) observed that overcrowding in classrooms make it difficult for students to write the lecturer is also unable to move around the class to assist needy students and this affects the teaching-learning process. Crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for learners to concentrate but inevitably limit the amount of time lecturers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work. Dahar & Faize (2011) noted that congestion within classrooms affects teaching-learning process. This is because the lecturer may not be able to move around to give individual attention to all the students in need due to the high number of students in class. Bhukuvhani, Kusure, Munodawafa, & Sana (2010) noted that in the United States of America, students who attend well maintained schools with good classrooms have a higher achievement than those who attend poorly maintained schools with poor classrooms. Schools with adequate facilities stand a better chance of providing education effectively.

Owoeye & Yara, (2011) found that student achievement was as much as 11 percentile points lower in substandard buildings as compared to above standard buildings. Schools with equipped laboratory have their students performing better than their counterparts in schools without laboratories or those with ill equipped laboratories. Laboratory work stimulates learners' interests as they are made to personally engage in useful scientific activities and experimentations (Owoeye

& Yara, 2011). This piece of knowledge presents a misleading situation where one may think that physical facilities are the only determinants of postgraduate students' completion rates, as if one can pick any student and enroll him/ her and s/he perform wonders and yet the neo-institutionalism postulates that this can only be achieved through interactions of factors in the environment under which they operate. Therefore, this study intended to unearth other learning environment determinants of postgraduate students' completion rates in a University environment.

2.2.2 University teaching Staff Diversity and Student Completion Rate

University teaching staff have substantial impact on their students' academic life long success (Blazar (2016). Staff diversity in an educational institution is measured by management behavior, staff qualifications, experience, and commitment to work in relation to the objectives of the institution (UNESCO, 2015). According to Marie and Neal (2011), administrative behavior is a pattern of actions/ conducts leaders prefer to use. Yukl, O'Donnell & Taber (2009); Influence of leader behaviors on the leader member exchange relationship; *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 24(4), 289-299 defined administration as a series of attitudes, characteristics and skills used by leaders in different situations in accordance with individual and organizational goals. Almanae (2006) reports that organizational environment prevailing in the community and its effects on performance as it determines the type of relationship between organizational environment elements.

Studies in countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Gambia and Kenya by Barret (2005) found that many lecturers were teaching not because of internal motivation but rather due to lack of other openings elsewhere. In Kenya, schools like all other organizations are advancing in complexity with different factors impacting on University management and performance. Consequently, challenges arise for University leaders to create an enabling working environment for members of staff, motivation, through appropriate code of administrative behaviors. Menon & Reppa (2011). Found that lecturers

with high job satisfaction exhibited characteristics such as low turnover, always present at school, highly efficient and effective and friendly to the administration.

On the other hand, lecturers with low job satisfaction exhibit apathy, worked towards promotions to other positions with better prospects or quit their jobs resulting in high lecturer education costs, were hostile to the administration, had reduced academic performance, valued material rewards, made frequent transfer requests and were regular absentees. According to Nkonge (2009) the lecturer has become the object of constant ridicule by both the students and the private. Okumbe (1998) stated that teaching is regarded as “employment of last resort” by most University leavers and University graduates. He concluded that in Kenya’s private schools, poor lecturer morale and stressed lecturers have become perennial problems. Unless this trend is checked, the country may fail to equip learners with relevant skills (Njeru & Orodho, 2008).

One of the ways of boosting lecturer morale is through modeling the lecturer’s administrative behaviors since these can lead to satisfaction of work life among the academic staff (Owalabi, 2006). Education leadership requires that the leader is responsible for overall management, control and maintenance of standards in the schools and is accountable for all that happens in the school. He is charged with the duty of planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting (Okumbe, 2001).

Institutional leadership involves supporting the physical resources and infrastructure such as providing car parks, lecture halls, office space and library services (Pitch forth, Beames, Thomas, Gasson, Thomprin & Mengersen, 2012; Stock et al., 2009). It is important for Universities to facilitate postgraduate students with office space to allow them complete their study programs earlier as compared to those without office space (Stock et al., 2009).

The leadership or management of library services is important to enhance postgraduate student's experience. These includes computer access, ease of access to the library when needed, access to electronic library resources, remote access to the library catalogues, intercampus books and materials' delivery services, library staff assistance and interlibrary loan services (Grebennikov & Shah, 2007; Pitchforth et al., 2012).

According to Wamala et al. (2012), postgraduate institutions need to offer solid remedial programs to address academic unpreparedness of new students especially those in thesis-based programs. It would be helpful to the candidates when the Universities conduct workshops on designing survey, data collection, data analysis and academic writing. Off campus support and conducting events that provides an avenue for networking with other research students and University research centers also assist students throughout their candidature (Grebennikov & Shah, 2007).

According to Ssegawa and Rwelamila (2009), it is clearly established that major reasons for research students' attrition are the lack of hand-on skills in the research process especially in the research definition and design stages. They further stated that another challenging task for research students is translating the defined and designed components in the framework into an acceptable and well-written proposal. The role of leadership in building these capabilities is lacking.

Additionally, the role of postgraduate leadership in Universities is to identify that research skills and inability to think critically, the skills necessary to plan and undertake independent study and research, and the development of the latest knowledge and skills is highly lacking among postgraduate students (Grebennikov & Shah, 2007). Based on Pitchforth et al. (2012), other skills required for timely PhD completion are incoming skills which refers to the research and management skills of the student at the time of enrolment such as time management skills, discipline expertise, English, writing and mathematics.

The University management should play a leadership in helping many of the candidature problems related to the expiration of the allowed period for candidature Cobb (2013). According to Nurhazani & Azlan (2015), getting started early on the thesis topic largely contributes to success. Therefore, the requirement to prepare research proposal before enrolment can reduce uncertainty and help students to progress at a faster speed. It is not clear whether lack of frequent contact with lectures, presents students with problems in undertaking research at UCU.

Delany (2013) also suggested keeping the same topic and supervisor because evidence has shown that students are significantly slowed down by changes in topics and arrangements. Despite disciplinary differences in organizing doctoral education, Pyhalto and Helsinki (2012) found no difference in the students' sense of relational agency between faculties due to poor leadership/management. Relational agency refers to candidates' capacity to work with others in order to better respond to complex research problems. It is research group status that is related to sense of relational agency. Students who carried out their thesis as a part of a research group perceived themselves as an active relational agent. This suggests that a sense of an active relational agency frequently occurred in group-based setting.

According to Mohamed, Ismail, Mustafa, & Mohd (2011). Some supervisors lack relevant training and experience to supervise research students. Pitchforth, & Beames (2012) found out that some supervisors are rigid and teach research the way they were taught thereby frustrating the student in the process. In a paper delivered at a workshop in Mashonaland Central, Pyhalto & Keskinen (2012). Highlighted some of the common criticisms usually leveled against research supervisors. Chief among them were that some supervisors lack relevant experience; lack relevant knowledge and skills required for the supervision of research projects; have little guidance and direction; hold few meetings with the research students.

Bonney, Amoah, Micah, Ahamenyio & Lemaire, (2015). Investigated the relationship between the quality of teachers and students' academic performance in Sekondi Takoradi metropolitan assembly high schools and reported that even though quality of teachers was high, in terms of academic and professional qualification, it did not reflect much on the performance of students. While assessing the effect of teacher characteristics and attitude on students' achievement in Kenya, Jepkoech & Tanui (2014) states that whereas teachers of Economic had positive attitude towards the subject, the students they teach still performed poorly however, negative attitude of teachers lowered performance. The same study discovered that there is a relationship between training and academic achievement in developing a conducive positive relationship. Qualification is measured in terms of professional credentials. In line with these, this study investigated post graduate teaching staff characteristics like teaching experience, qualification and commitment towards work and how they relate to students' completion.

Poor University management has led to graduate supervision challenges. Lack of clear guidelines for research argues Nyawaranda (2005) has been one of the major factors contributing to students' low completion rate. Problems with supervision is the reason most frequently mentioned for non-completion of masters/PhD (Ssegawa, & Rwelamila (2009). At a basic level it is also noted that more frequent supervision is strongly correlated with successful completion (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Based on Delany (2013), the characteristics of good supervisors who are approachable, friendly, supportive, have positive attitude, open minded, prepared to acknowledge error, organized, thorough, stimulating, conveys enthusiasm for research.

Some postgraduate institutions have no handbook on Guidelines to postgraduate research for use by postgraduate students. Despite all these efforts and provisions and the actual supervision students receive, the progress of research students and their completion rate have remained unacceptably

low. The question why the postgraduate students continue to experience low completion rates remains unanswered. The study gave students the opportunity to describe their experiences and what they perceive as major factors affecting their progress and success at UCU.

A good supervisor plays his/her role as a director, facilitator, adviser, teacher, guide, critic, freedom giver, supporter, friend, and a manager. It is essential to have positive relationship between students and supervisors because the quality of the interaction and personal quality of the supervisor are important predictors of timely postgraduate completion. All this is a responsibility of postgraduate institutions to play a leading role in management/leadership (Stock, Finegan, & Siegfried, 2009). Sneyers & Witte (2014) states that attracting old staff at Universities can be an effective remedy to low students' completion rates. This is because old staff is considered experienced enough to guide post graduate students and see them through the studies.

2.2.3 Students' Factors and Completion Rates

A number of student factors come into play to influence their attrition and completion of a study program. Some studies have pointed failure of students to complete their studies within the mandatory time due to low personal commitment towards their studies, financial constraints, busy work schedules at the place of employment and loss of morale. Cherastidtham & Notorn (2018) notes that students who study part time have a high risk of failing to complete than full time (80%). Because students need to finance their studies, they spend much time working rather than study. In addition, working causes stress and destruction which undermines students' academic work. Wohlgemuth, et al. (2006) studied financial, academic and environmental influences on retention and graduation of students. Data on demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity age, in state residence ability), University athlete, and University honors program, first generation students

entering college and financial aid (loans, gifts, work study) characteristics. From the study, most of the student factors were linked to retention and completion of the study programs.

While studying how students' factors affect their likelihood of completing University, Cherastidtham & Notorn (2018) reports that female students have a higher likelihood of completing than their male counterparts. Further, young students have a lower likelihood however prior academic achievements do not affect students' completion. The nature of study time has also been associated with completion rates. The full-time students usually receive financial assistance and do not have major financial worries. Similar with mode of study, the influence of scholarship or financial assistance on PhD students' completion or attrition remains uncertain (Wang, 2007). Wamala, Ocaya, & Oonyu (2012) report that students who hold a scholarship have shorter candidature. This is consistent with Stock et al. (2009), but only among US citizens, and not non-US citizens. In contrast, Wamala et al. (2012) discovered that in Makerere University, Africa students with scholarship or financial assistance are more likely to extend their candidature to more than five years. According to Kearns, Gardiner and Marshall (2008), self-handicapping behavior makes postgraduate such a difficult process and prevents candidates from completing on time. Self-handicapping behavior or self-sabotage can be defined as the process of creating obstacles to your goals for reasoning if failure occurs. The process could be real or imagined. Self-handicapping behaviors commonly displayed by postgraduate students are over committing, busyness, perfectionism, procrastination, disorganization, not putting in effort, and choosing performance-debilitating circumstances.

Over committing can be described as taking on so many things such as part-time job or other responsibilities that completing postgraduate, the high priority goals suffer. Busyness refers to looking very busy getting less important things such as attending many seminars done but hardly

has the time for more important tasks such as writing a draft of the first chapter. Sneyers & Witte (2014) point out that the greater students are academically integrated in the life of institution, the greater the chances that they persist and complete their studies in the prescribed time. Students who feel they do not fit academically in the environment of the institution possess lower levels of satisfaction than those who feel they belong to the institution and hence persist to completion.

Sneyers & Witte (2014) while studying the interaction between drop out, graduation rates and quality rating in Universities argue that student's satisfaction has a positive influence on student graduation. However, the academic dismissal policy was not correlated to completion. Institutions with high ratio of female students have higher graduation rates. The study recommended supporting ethnic minority students, improving student program satisfaction. However, students' self-commitment interacts with other factor to determine whether they complete or drop out of the program as Juillerat (1995) as quoted by Demaris & Kristsonis (2008) showed that students who participate actively in learning possess higher satisfaction rates than those not involved. Students who persist are those who have high levels of contact with peers and faculty. The more time students invest in their own learning, the higher their level of completion. Bound, Lovenheim & Turner (2007) while assessing reasons for decrease in college completion rates and the increased time, reported that whereas enrollment into colleges in USA had increased, the less prepared students were unlikely to complete their study programs resulting into overall decline in completion rate. Furthermore, evidence of increased hours of employment among students is consistent with students working more to meet rising college costs thereby negatively affecting the length of time it takes them to complete collage

Pitchforth et al. (2012) states that, completing graduate programs like PhD on time is a complex process influenced by many factors. The factors are the student, the supervisor, and University

research students' center managers. These directly influence timely completion where personal aspects, the research environment, the research project and in giving skills. Swan (2010) studied factors influencing intent to persist in higher education of participants in USA and noted that psychosocial integration factors may be significantly related to student departure decisions. In reference to the literature here, there is need to conduct a study to ascertain the extent to which the situations in literature applies to Uganda Christian University postgraduate students. This study sought to establish whether postgraduate students' characteristics in terms financial abilities, personal commitments, employment status, affect completion of postgraduate programs.

2.4 Summary

The reviewed related literature regarding University learning Environment and Student Completion Rates in the academia clearly indicates that University physical environment, staff diversity and students' factors are key considerations when it comes to learning Environment. As such, from the reviewed literature, the researcher was able to examine how learning environment affects Postgraduate students' completion rates in private Universities in Uganda while drawing lessons from Uganda Christian University Mukono

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods that were used to conduct the study; it covers description of the research design, population and sampling techniques, data collection, quality control, data analysis, study limitations and delimitation.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design . The design was considered appropriate for the study due to the fact that it is used to gather data from a sample of a population at a particular time in order to obtain information about preferences, attitudes, practices, concerns or interests of a group of people (Amin, 2005). Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for analysis qualitative and quantitative data respectively.

3.2 Target Population and Sampling Techniques

3.2.1 Target Population

The study population consisted of 157 respondents that included 120 graduate school students, 20 graduate school teaching staff, 15 senior administrators (faculty deans), academic registrar and deputy academic registrar. The population sizes under the different categories respondents are based on records retrieved from the University website (ucu.ac.ug). These groups of people were believed to be well knowledgeable about the University's Learning environment and students' completion related issues and thus able to avail the necessary information that the researcher is interested in.

3.2.2 Sample

Sample determination involved a number of sampling techniques. For the senior administrative staff, purposive sampling was used whereas for the teaching and students, population, proportionate sampling be used with the help of Krejcie & Morgan (1970)'s sample size determination table. Generally sampling was distributed as per the table below.

Table 1 Table 3.1 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

<i>Sn.</i>	Category	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Techniques
1	Academic Registrar's Office	01	01	Purposive sampling
2	Deputy Academic Registrar	01	01	Purposive sampling
3	Senior administrative staff (faculty deans)	15	15	Purposive sampling
4	Post-graduate school teaching staff	20	19	Proportionate sampling
5	Postgraduate students	120	92	Proportionate sampling
	TOTAL	157	128	

3.2.3 Sampling Technique

3.2.3.1 Purposive sampling

This was used to select Academic registrar and Deputy Registrar because of their extensive knowledge about the variables under study and have wider exposure as well as experience about the relationship between learning environment and post graduate students' completion rates at UCU. In principle they should also have the interest to provide the information

3.2.3.2 Proportionate Sampling

Proportionate sampling was used to select representative samples among the post graduate teaching staff and post graduate students. Each member had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study using simple random sampling after determination of sample size with the help of Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s table of sample determination. These methods helped to avoid bias and provide relevant, accurate and adequate data for the study. The advantages of a simple random sampling techniques is that, it is easy to use and it gives accurate representation of the larger population.

3.3 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was obtained from respondents in the field while secondary data was in form of existing documents and reports on students' enrolment and graduation/ completion. The major tools used were given under the following sub-sections.

3.3.1 Research Instruments

3.3.1.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the main data collection instrument to gather data about the topic of study from graduate school students and teaching staff. The questionnaires consisted of close ended questions; and designed in line with what has been used in the literature and in an appropriate way for the respondents to give their perceptions, opinions, views, and feelings about organizational environment and postgraduate students' completion rates (Apendices I & II). This instrument is deemed appropriate in this study due to the fact that it is a tool for data collection which is less expensive to administer (Saris, Irmtraud & Gallhofer, 2017). The questionnaire is also convenient for literate respondents (like students and lecturers in the current case) who were able to fill it objectively and within a short time. The Likert scale was used, where respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Not Sure (NS), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA).

3.3.1.2 Interview Guide

Interview guide was used to collect data on the topic of study from key informants including Academic registrar, Deputy Academic Registrar and Senior Administrative Staff like faculty Deans (Appendix III) Information obtained was used to supplement that obtained by questionnaires. This method is preferred in this study because of its ability to give detailed information of the matter of investigation which may not be possible with questionnaire.

3.3.1.3 Documentary Review

The main sources of secondary data were to be obtained from the field included intake/enrolment, registration and graduation lists and manuals for postgraduate students; University policy and performance reports and any graduate proposal and thesis presentation minutes and reports. These were sourced from the relevant offices at the University, University website and other online libraries.

3.3.2 Research Procedure

An introductory letter was obtained from the Head of Department, Education Planning and management, Kyambogo University. This letter was presented to the office of the Academic Registrar-Uganda Christian University-Mukono, to seek permission to undertake the research study in the University. Arrangements were made with the target respondents for Interviews while questionnaires were hand-delivered and the researcher/research assistant had to wait until they were dully filled and handed back.

3.4 Quality Control

Quality of the research instruments were measured in terms of validity and reliability.

3.4.1 Validity of Instruments

Validity is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Research tools were first prepared, presented to the supervisors who checked on their correctness. The supervisors' comments were used to improve the questionnaire by eliminating all errors. Besides, senior researchers in the faculty of education were given the tools to judge their validity. Content Validity Index (CVI) was determined using the formula;

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{Agreed items by all judges as suitable}}{\text{Total number of the items judged}}$$

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{35}{53}$$

$$= 0.66$$

Therefore, the overall content validity Index of the instruments is equal to 0.66 which is above the average acceptable index of 0.5 or above for the instrument to be accepted as valid according to Amin, (2005).

3.4.2 Reliability

To measure the degree to which the instruments were reliable to yield consistent results, a reliability test was carried out. According to Mugenda et al (2003) a reliable research instrument should yield consistent results when repeated in similar conditions and is usually expressed as a correlation coefficient. The process in this study involved; test-retest method by way of pilot study from a similar population in the schools. Questionnaires were presented to ten teachers and the responses were subjected to a reliability test. Using Cronbach alpha in SPSS, reliability co-efficient of 0.72 was established which was well above 0.5; which is an average coefficient to give reliable results according to Amin (2005). After the reliability test, the instrument was discussed with the supervisors endowed with vast experience and items that were found to be vague were modified.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative data Analysis

The data obtained by questionnaires was cleaned, sorted and computer-coded and transformed into quantitative data. The data analysis was then carried out with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) software version 21.0. Descriptive statistics in form frequencies and percentages were used to describe the primary variables and associated indicator items related to the study objectives. The results were presented in form of tables and charts then discussed in relation to existing literature.

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The data collected using interview with key informants and documentary analysis were analyzed qualitatively using disclose and content analysis. The data was organized based on patterns, repetitions and commonalities into different themes and sub-themes. This kind of data was interpreted accordingly and presented by way of verbatim quotations from the responses obtained during interviews with informants and in accordance with the study objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The study focused on establishing the effect of University learning environment on post graduate students' completion at Uganda Christian University in Mukono. The emphasis specifically was put on; the physical environment, staff diversity and students' factors. To achieve the study objectives and answer the research questions, questionnaires and interviews were administered to the respondents. The questionnaires formed the main data collection tools whereas data from key informant interviews were used to reinforce the responses obtained using questionnaires. Two different questionnaires were presented to two categories of respondents (University teaching staff and graduate school students).

The questionnaires presented the target respondents comprised of sections corresponding to the study objectives. The questionnaires contained statements/questions indicative of University physical environment, staff diversity, students' factors and graduate studies' completion at UCU Mukono. The respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements and their responses were coded using a 5-level Linkert scale that is; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Not Sure (NS), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree. For purposes of analysis and interpretation of data, the responses; "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" were combined and referred to as "Agree"; while "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" were combined and referred to as "Disagree". Hence, percentages and frequencies of responses on the questionnaire items were analyzed in terms of "Agree" and "Disagree" while "Not Sure" remained as it was. The data obtained through interviews with key informants were qualitatively analyzed using content analysis

and the results were presented with quotes in verbatim form under the corresponding study findings' themes.

4.1 Presentation of Bio-data Information

The first sections of the questionnaires gathered information on the baseline characteristics of the sample population inform of gender and age group. The results on gender are shown in Figure 4.1

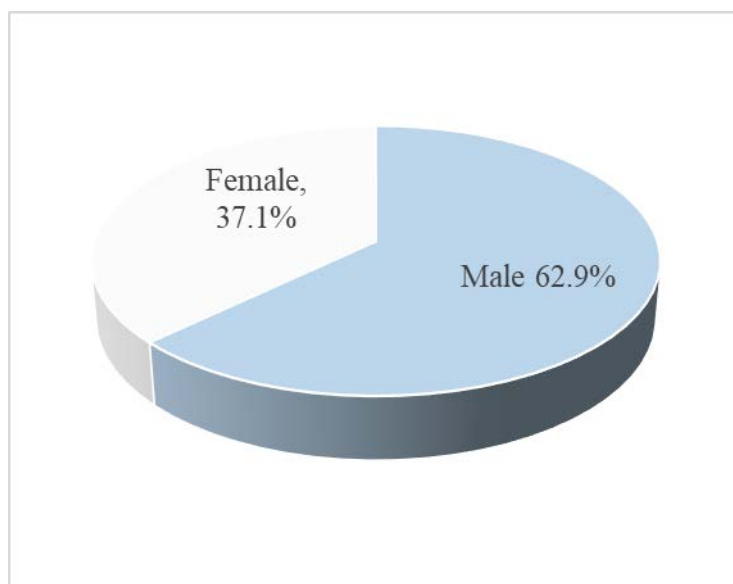


Figure 4 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

Source: Survey data (2018)

Figure 4.1 shows that out of 97 respondents who participated in the study, majority were male (62%) compared to their female counter parts (37.1%). The implication of the above finding is that the study was dominated by male respondents. This reflects that the study was not gender balanced. Although this was the case, the ideas and opinions of all the respondents were taken and thus considered very essential to accomplish the study. This helped to avoid biasness as objectivity of all responses was considered in regard to University environment and graduate students' completion.

The researcher elicited data about age distribution of the respondents and the findings were as below.

Table 4.1.1: Age group of the respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-30 years	10	10.3
31-39 years	31	35.1
40-49 years	52	53.6
50 years and above	1	1
Total	97	100

Source: Primary data (2018)

Table 4.1.1 reveals that, majority of the respondents (53.6%) were aged 40-49 years, (35.1%) were in the age group between 31-39 years, (10.3%) were in the age group of 20-30 years while (1%) were aged 50 years and above. The implication of the above finding is that, majority of the respondents were adults and resourceful in providing relevant and valid information about the effect of University learning environment on the completion of graduate students at UCU-Mukono

The respondents in the teaching staff categories were asked to indicate the years they have been in active teaching with the University and the results are observed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1.2 Work experience at UCU

Frequency	Percent	
1-5 years	3	15
6-10 years	3	15
11-15 years	7	35
Above 15 years	7	35
Total	20	100.

Results in table 4.2 reveal that majority of the respondents (70%) had worked at the University for a period of 11 years and above while 30% had served in the University for a period of 10 years and below. These results imply that majority of the respondents had worked for a considerable period of time at the University and therefore were familiar with the University environment and graduate students' completion rate.

4.2 University physical environment and graduate students' completion rates at UCU-Mukono

To assess the effect of University physical environment on graduate students' completion, the researcher presented a number of questions to the respondents and measured their return responses on a 5-level-Linkert scale. The results from the analysis are summarized in the table 4.2.1 below.

Respondents provided their views in relation to the extent to which they strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2), Not sure (3), Agree (4), strongly agree (5). These results were presented in the Table shown below.

Table 4.2.1: University Physical Environment and graduate students' completion in at UCU-Mukono (n = 97)

No	To what extent do you agree/disagree that;	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
		1	UCU has sufficient lecture rooms to enable efficient learning	-	-	-	-	6	6.2	4	50.5
2	Spacious lecture rooms in the University allow favorable study environment	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	95.9	4	4.1
3	Updated Teaching materials motivate lecturers to deliver to their best	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	100	-	-
4	Lecture rooms are clean and well air conditioned for health learning	-	-	7	7.2	12	12.4	7	79.4	1	1.0
5	Sharing of the limited computers make students retake and delay completion of course/computer laboratory	5	5.2	21	21.1	65	67	6	6.2	-	-
6	Students who reside in University halls complete on time	-	-	-	-	6	6.2	9	92.8	1	1.0
7	Quality residential amenities provide conducive learning environment	1	1.0	-	-	4	4.1	9	93.8	1	1.0
8	Internet access is everywhere to facilitate student research	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.4	85	87.
9	Active participation in co-curricular activities enhances high completion rate	-	-	-	-	6	6.2	9	93.8	-	-
10	Adequate and comfortable seats	-	-	3	3.1	3	3.1	8	88.7	5	5.2
11	Attractive physical environment	-	-	-	-	2	2.1	9	97.9	-	-

Source: Primary Data (2018)

Table 4.2.1 reveals the findings on the effect of University physical environment on completion of graduate students at UCU-Mukono. On the statement that UCU has sufficient lecture rooms to enable efficient learning, 91 (93.8%) of the respondents agreed while 6 (6.2%) indicated not sure. By the fact that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement implies that the University has got sufficient lecture rooms to facilitated graduate studies. However, the fact that 6.2 % of the respondents indicated that they were not sure whether the University has got sufficient lecture rooms or not could also point to the fact that some of the graduate students are not completely aware of their physical learning environment which could also signify little or no concern for the physical environment they study in.

On the view that spacious lecture rooms at the University provide a conducive environment for learning, all the respondents agreed (97- 100%). This implies that UCU has not only put in place sufficient lecture rooms to facilitated graduate studies but also made them so specious for the students' comfort during learning.

The respondents also agreed with the statement that the University has updated teaching/learning materials for use by the lecturers which motivates them to deliver effectively and facilitate graduate students' studies to completion. This finding could imply that most of the graduate courses do not require much material making them affordable and easy to update by the University or some of the practical courses receive minimal numbers that the materials are sufficient for all.

Another aspect of the physical environment to which respondents gave their opinion too, was whether UCU lecture rooms are clean and well air conditioned for health learning. In their response, 7 (7.2%) of the respondents disagreed, 12 (12.4%) indicated that they were not sure whereas 78 (80.4%) agreed with the statement. This means that majority of the respondents consented to the fact that the lecture rooms at UCU are clean and air-conditioned for comfort and healthy learning.

The few indicated not sure represent those that possibly spend less time in the lecture rooms during the time air conditioning systems are switched off and are not so critical to what is in their learning environment apart from the learning process itself.

On the statement that sharing of the limited computers make students retake and delay completion of course, 26 (26.8%) of the respondents disagreed 65 (67%) indicate that they were not sure while 6 (6.2%) agreed with the statement. These results here imply that majority of the respondents were not sure of whether sharing limited computers is one of the reasons for retake and delayed completion by graduate students. This also implies that the University has equipped computer laboratory with sufficient computers to address the needs of whoever wants to use them. The fact that some respondents 26 (26.8%) disagreed with the statement also signifies that some of the graduate students at UCU have got personal computers but still fail to complete in time.

Table 4.2.1 further reveals that, 6 (6.2%) of the respondents were not sure while 91 (93.8%) agreed with the statement that graduate students who reside in University halls complete on time. This means that majority of the respondents believe that University accommodation for graduate students contributes towards their completion in time.

In line with graduate students' accommodation contributing toward completion, the respondents were also asked to indicate whether residential amenities provided at the University were of quality and conducive to allow learning and completion, 1(1%) of the respondents disagreed, 4 (4.1%) indicated not sure while 92 (94.8%) agreed. This means, majority of the respondents believe that it is not just the availability of accommodation in the University that contributes towards completion but also the quality of accommodation too plays a big role.

All the respondents agreed (100%) with the fact that UCU has internet access everywhere to facilitate graduate students' research and therefore complete their programs in time. The meaning of these results is that the University management understands the dynamics of the academic needs of the learners and among which is the need to have access to online study materials that enhance research which an integral part of post graduate.

Majority of the respondents (91.8%) agreed that active participation in co-curricular activities enhances high completion rate at UCU while 6 (6.2%) indicated that they were not sure. The implication of these findings is that majority of the respondents are of the view that physical facilities for co-curricular activities are available at the University and that their availability positively contributes towards learning and graduate student's completion.

On the view that the University has got adequate and comfortable sitting facilities to facilitate graduate students to complete in time, 3 (3.1%) of the respondents disagreed, 3 (3.1%) were not sure and 91 (93.9%) agreed. This means that the University has got all what it takes to facilitate graduate students' learning.

Another aspect of the University physical environment that respondents were required to respond to was whether the University physical environment at UCU is attractive to facilitate learning, while responding, 2 (2.1%) of the respondents indicated that they were not sure while 95 (97.9%) agreed. The significance of this revelation is that generally the physical environment at UCU is attractive to the learners.

The qualitative results obtained from interviews with different categories of staff on aspects of the physical learning environment at UCU also indicate that the university provides avenues for a conducive physical environment for graduate students learning. 85% of the staff interviewed

indicated that much emphasis is put on ensuring lecture rooms are clean, big enough and equipped with the necessary teaching and learning equipment and materials. One administrator A had this to say,

Our students' learning environment constitutes spacious lecture rooms equipped with teaching gadgets like computers, projectors, adequate lighting and air conditioning. For students who have personal computers, they just supplement on what is existing otherwise what is available is enough for each of the students. (19/11/2018).

In another interview session with one of the administrators (B), it was stated;

The university has even installed wireless internet in strategic location from where students that have personal computers can have access to online resources as according to their course needs and generally for research which should enable them complete their study programs in time. So, the idea of saying internet being only accessible in the University computer laboratories doesn't arise here. (19/11/2018).

Another Senior Administrator (C) revealed that,

The effect of physical learning environment on post graduate students' completion is not much felt by post graduate students at UCU since they spend very limited time at the University although they prefer smart classrooms with high tech computer stations at their desks. (21/11/2018).

During an interview session (24/11/2018), another administrator (D) indicated that all post graduate students at UCU are encouraged to reside in the University Halls of residence such that they can have enough time off work and home obligations to concentrate on academic programs especially

in the first year. This means that the university management has put in place physical facilities that are necessary to facilitate students' studies to completion within the time allotted. It also implies that the University recognizes the need to provide a comfortable physical environment for the students.

From the above results, it can be stated that the physical environment at UCU is conducive for graduate students to undertake their programs to completion. This therefore means that the low completion rates at the University can be accounted for by other factors. The research question; "to what extent does University physical environment affect postgraduate students' completion at UCU?" can be answered by stating that staff diversity at UCU affects graduate students' completion but to a small extent.

4.3 University staff diversity and graduate students' completion at UCU-Mukono

In an effort to elicit the effect of University staff diversity on graduate students' completion in UCU Mukono. Research tools whose findings about the extent to which respondents; Strongly disagreed (1), Disagreed (2), were not sure (3), Agreed (4), Strongly agreed (5), were presented as in the table below;

Table 4.3.1: University staff diversity and graduate students' completion at UCU- Mukono (n=97)

No	To what extent do you agree/disagree that;	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
		1	Lecturers qualifications are commensurate to the course units they teach.	-	-	3	3.1	1	1.0	3	39.2
2	Lecturers are well experienced to successfully guide the students to complete in time.	-	-	1	1.0	1	1.0	7	72.2	25	25.8
3	Staff managerial competencies aid monitoring, supervision and evaluation to influence students' completion rate.	-	-	1	1.0	-	-	8	82.5	16	16.5
4	The lecturers are regular and punctual for lectures enhance students' completion rate.	2	2.1	9	9.3	6	6.2	7	77.3	5	5.2
5	Staff administer leadership competencies in handling students' academic matters which encourage students to commit themselves to studies	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	96.9	2	2.1
6	Lecturers' positive attitudes towards guiding and helping students on academic matters promote maximum completion rate.	-	-	1	1.0	-	-	6	63.9	34	35.1
7	Lecturers exhibit good interpersonal skills in handling academic matters providing an enabling learning environment.	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	88.8	11	11.3
8	Lecturers' communication abilities enable students to clearly understand academic tasks and enhances completion rate.	-	-	4	4.1	5	5.2	8	88.7	2	2.1
9	Lecturers' personality is a determinant of student's completion of study.	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	32.0	66	68.0

Source: Field data 2018

Table 4.3.1 findings revealed that, lecturers' qualifications at UCU are commensurate to the courses they teach, 3 (3.1%) of the respondents disagreed, 1 (1%) were not sure and 93 (95.9%) agreed.

This revelation indicates that post graduate students at UCU are taught by qualified staff and therefore able to guide them through their course tenure successfully. However, the 3% who disagreed could be the few who are discontented with the current staff qualifications.

1 (1%) of the respondents disagreed, 1 (1%) indicated not sure, while 95 (98%) agreed that lecturers are well experienced to successfully guide graduate students to complete in time. The results from baseline data of the teaching staff also revealed that majority of staff (73.6%) had obtained PhDs whereas others have masters' degrees (26.4). This implies that the teaching staff has the necessary qualifications to teach graduates.

On the view that staff managerial competencies at UCU aid monitoring, supervision and evaluation to influence students' completion rate, 1 (1%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 96 (99%) agreed. Similarly, on the question that staff at the University administer leadership competencies in handling students' academic matters which encourage students to commit themselves to studies, all the respondents agreed with the statement. The implication of this revelation is that the respondents consent to the idea that UCU Mukono teaching and administrative staff has the competence to facilitate graduate studies.

On the question of whether lecturers are regular and punctual for lectures or not, to enhances students' completion, 11 (11.4%) of the respondents disagreed, 6 (6.2%) indicated that they were not sure whereas 80 (82.5%) agreed. This means that for the graduate students who fail to complete in time do so due to their own or other factors otherwise the staff commit all the time required for graduate students to complete their programs.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether lecturers at UCU have a positive attitude towards guiding and helping students on academic matters to promote maximum completion rate 1 (1%) disagreed whereas 96 (99%) agreed. The meaning of this finding is that lecturers at UCU Mukono have positive attitude towards guiding students to complete their post graduate studies in time therefore if they fail to complete in time then it is attributed to other factors.

Similarly, on the view that lecturers exhibit good interpersonal skills in handling academic matters thus providing an enabling learning environment at UCU, all the 97 (100%) of the respondents agreed. This implies that staff at UCU is diverse in terms of interpersonal skills which is aimed at supporting graduate students to complete their studies within the mandatory time.

Lecturers' communication abilities enable students to clearly understand academic tasks and enhances completion rate, 4 (4.1%) disagreed, 5 (5.2%) indicated that they were not sure while 86 (90.7%) who were also the majority agreed with the statement. This means that the teaching staff at UCU have enabling communication skills to facilitate interaction with students while receiving guidelines on issues like research and thus would enable them pursue their studies to completion. Similarly, all the respondents agreed that lecturers' personality is a determinant of student's completion of study at UCU Mukono.

Related to communication abilities of lecturers, 7 (7.3%) disagreed, 1 (1%) indicated that they were not sure while 89 (91.8%) of the respondents who were also the majority agreed with the statement, that teaching staff at UCU have customer care skills to promote graduate students' completion.

The results obtained from interview with key informants (administrative staff) on the extent to which UCU staff diversity affect graduate students' completion didn't vary much from those

obtained by way of questionnaire. On the aspect of staff qualification for example one administrator stated that;

All the lecturers teaching here at (UCU) are highly qualified to handle post graduate students. 80% of them have attained PhDs with vast experience and those with masters are currently pursuing their PhDs". (19/11/2018)

Similarly, another senior staff member at the UCU reported that;

All staff is interviewed right from the departments to the human resource director, before they get appointed and they must have met the necessary requirements for that positions applied for. There are no human resource gaps due to the fact that the relevant office always provides the necessary human resources when and as need arises. (21/11/2018)

It was also noted from the interview sessions (19-24/11/2018-A, B, C, D, & E) with over 85% key informants that the university provides the teaching staff with all materials needed to aid in the teaching and learning that is, white boards, Flipcharts, teaching gadgets and make follow up on lecturers who miss out on teaching students. This indicated that there are lecturers who some time miss teaching the student. This means that the administrators are aware that if their missing of lectures is accumulative it can hamper students' academics to an extent that they fail to complete their study programs.

To show that the university has a high diverse staff, it has put in place mechanism by which not only students' academic concerns are addressed but also other students' affairs that also affect their academic life as reported by one of the administrators (E) in an interview that;

Christian fellowships are conducted on Tuesdays and Thursdays and the whole university community is obliged to attend which has greatly impacted on students' morals and behavior. There is an office under the headship of Director of Students' Affairs (DOSA) which handles students' issues beyond just academics. Besides, there are university counselors who are professionally trained to handle students who for fail to live by the rules of the university such that their academics too are affected. The staff also always encourages their students to focus on academics and even follow-up on those who have issues with course works and exams (23/11/2018).

Whereas counselling may work out for relatively young students like those at undergraduate level, it may unlikely with mature postgraduate students who are mostly nonresidents at the university and who at most times are busy occupied with other obligations outside academics. Which means that whereas counselling may be seen as a remedy for students to endeavor to follow university guidelines, only a few post graduate students perhaps visit the counselors.

The results from interviews with various UCU staff categories here imply that the university actually has highly diverse staff including lecturers with the necessary competencies to handle students' academic matters to enable them to not only complete their studies but also in time.

On the basis of the above findings on staff diversity at UCU Mukono, it can be noted that the University has got a diversity of teaching staff with the capacity to handle postgraduate studies and therefore enable students to complete their programs within the mandatory time. The research question; "to what extent does University staff diversity affect postgraduate students' completion at UCU?" can be answered by stating that staff diversity at UCU affects graduate students' completion but to a lesser extent, as other factors come into play when it comes to post graduate study programs completion rate.

4.4 The effect of Students' factors on graduate students' completion at UCU-Mukono

The third objective of the study was to establish “*The effect of students' factors on graduate students completion at UCU-Mukono*” the researcher administered research tools whose findings about the extent to which respondents Strongly Disagreed (1), Disagreed (2), Not sure (3), Agreed (4), and Strongly agreed (5), are presented in the Table 4.4.1.

Table 4.4.1: The effect of Students' factors on graduate students' completion at UCU-Mukono (n = 97)

No	To what extent do you agree/disagree that;	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
		1	Students are less committed to their studies which makes them fail to complete in time	7	7.2	32	32.9	3	3.1	3	30.
2	Self-sponsored students face financial challenges thus lug on the program	-	-	6	6.2	1	1.0	9	92.	-	-
3	Graduate students are affected by job commitments	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	50.	48	49.5
4	Students who freely interact find it easy to complete their studies in the stipulated time	-	-	-	-	6	6.2	9	93.	-	-
5	Post-graduate courses demand demoralizes some students thereby delaying them on the program	-	-	18	18.6	1	1.0	7	75.	5	5.2
6	Students who have poor background at undergraduate level continue to have problems at postgraduate level as well	-	-	16	16.5	3	3.1	7	79.	1	1.0

Source: Primary Data (2018)

Table 4.4.1 indicates the responses on the effect of graduate school students' factors on completion rates at UCU Mukono. On the statement that students are less committed to their studies which makes them fail to complete in time, 39 (40%) of the respondents disagreed, 3 (3%) were not sure while 55% agreed. Thus, majority of the respondents agreed with the fact that most of the students who fail to complete their graduate studies in time are less committed to their studies. But because some respondents (40%) disagreed with the statement, these could be part of the student respondents who did want to commit that they are less committed. An administrator stated during an interview session that; "it is surprising that most of the graduate students who delay on program have got very good course work grades".

Another aspect of students' factors evaluated during the study was the fact that self-sponsored students face financial challenges thus lag on the program. In response, 90 (92.8%) who were also the majority agreed. 6.2% disagreed while 1% indicated not sure. These results point towards the major reason for low completion rates of majority of the students at UCU. The results also imply that majority of the students at UCU are on self-sponsorship, thus bound to face financial difficulties that delay completion of studies. The 6.2% of the respondents who disagreed could represent those who are sponsored.

Respondents also overwhelmingly agreed 97 (100%) that graduate students are affected by job commitments. The fact that post graduate programs are mainly undertaken by mature students as was shown in the age distribution of the respondents implies that they are of a working group whose work commitments reduce on time available for concentration while at the University and thus delayed course completion. All the administrators (100%) reached during interviews consented to the fact that, very busy schedules of graduate students pose a hindrance to completion of their study programs.

On the view that graduate students who freely interact find it easy to complete their studies in the stipulated time, 91 (93.8%) of the respondents agreed while 6 (6.2%) indicated not sure. The results on students, interaction and completion here signify that, most of the respondents especially graduate school students feel they need sharing of knowledge which would enable them succeed in their graduate studies. The fact that they agree with the statement shows that they also recognize the need to have support from friends to be able to complete within the stipulated time.

On the question that post-graduate demands demoralize students, 18 (18.6%) of the respondents disagreed, 1(1%) indicated not sure and 78 (80.5%) who were also the majority. This means that respondents consent to the fact that post-graduate study programs are so demanding that some students may get overwhelmed and drop out of the program, and for those who remain on the program delay to complete.

The respondents were also required to respond to the statement that graduate students who have poor background at undergraduate level continue to have problems at postgraduate level as well. In response 16 (16.5%) disagreed, 3 (3.1%) were not sure, while 78 (80.4%) of the respondents agreed. This means that majority of the respondents consent that undergraduate level studies form a foundation for post graduate studies such that a poor background brings about low completion rate at post-graduate level. But the fact that some respondents disagreed with the statement signifies that some of the respondents believe that graduate students can still fair well at post-graduate level even with a poor undergraduate background.

Responses from key informants on the effect of the various aspects of students' factors on post graduate students' completion rate at UCC were largely in agreement with the results from questionnaires. Among the administrators (A~H) one (C) mentioned that;

In fact, post graduate students are very active for the first year when they are still having class work but in the second or third year when they are away, they get busy with their families and work-related issues among others. This makes it a bit hard to interact with their academic supervisors. Besides too many demands from student's jobs, do not allow them to concentrate on academics. (21/11/2018)

Most of the administrators interviewed (78%) indicated that although students at UCU are provided with handbooks at the time of admission which have all the rules and regulations which they must abide by to enable them go through their studies successfully, most of them don't follow the guidelines strictly and that is why they end up abandoning the programs or delay completion. A senior administrator (G) at the University had this to say during an interview;

Students behavior affects students' completion in that students who attend lectures, do all course works and exams in time usually complete their study programs as scheduled compared to their counterparts, other factors held constant. (28/11/2018)

This means much of what fails post graduate students from completing their study programs is enshrined within the students themselves as the University endeavors to play its role and what remains is on the side of the students.

From the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results obtained on the extent to which students' factors affect post graduate study programs completion at UCU, the third research question can be answered by starting that, students factors such as; job and home commitments, financial constraints, non-participation in academic discussions, and less commitment to academics delays students on study programs and thus negatively affect graduate students' completion rate.

4.5 Graduate students' completion at UCU-Mukono

Responses on the measurement of the dependent variable, “completion” indicated by respondents in regard to the extent to which they strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), not sure (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5) are given in Table 4.5.1.

Table 4.5.1: The measures of students' completion

No	To what extent do you agree/disagree that	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Most graduate students at UCU Graduate within the mandatory period	-	-	78	80.4	1	1.0	18	18.6	1	1.0
2	Final year graduate students fail to graduate due to missing marks and retakes	2	2.1	58	59.8	7	7.2	28	28.9	2	2.1
3	Poor coursework results fail graduation within mandatory completion period	77	79.4	3	3.1	3	3.1	13	13.4	1	1%
4	Lecturers delay marking and release of results attributing to low completion rate	83	85.6	3	3.1	2	2.1	4	4.1	5	5.2
5	Frequent retaking at UCU destabilizes students' academic concentration leading to low completion	4	4.1	57	58.8	-	-	30	30.9	6	6.2
6	All students who failed to complete since 2006 at UCU are on Amnesty program	-	-	21	21.6	76	78.4	-	-	-	-
7	Students who dislike class presentations, discussions, do not complete within their tenure	1	1.0	18	18.6	2	2.1	56	57.7	20	20.6
8	Exorbitant extension fees make students strike and delay their completion of studies	-	-	4	4.1	-	-	-	-	57	58.8
9	A considerable number of students delay to finish writing the proposal which is a requirement to write a final report.	-	-	9	9.3	-	-	63	64.9	25	25.8

Source: Primary Data (2018)

Table 4.5.1 shows the results on completion at UCU-Mukono. On the view that that most graduate students at UCU graduate within the mandatory course time, 78 (84.4%) of the respondents

disagreed, 1 (1%) indicated that they were not sure, 19 (19.6%) agreed, while 1(1%). This implies that majority of the respondents agreed that most students don't complete their studies in time. This therefore means that completion rates are low at the University

On the statement that final year graduate students fail to graduate due to missing marks and retakes, 60 (61.9%) disagreed, 7 (7.2%) were not sure whereas 30 (31%) agreed. The results here could mean that missing marks and retakes are not common issues that cause most graduate students to fail to graduate at UCU in time. It also means that probably those who get retakes break off from the programs or that students are able to complete their class work without problems.

The respondents were also asked to indicate whether poor coursework results fail graduation within mandatory completion period. In response, 80 (81.5%) disagreed, 3 (3.1%) were not sure whereas 14 (14.4%) agreed. The reasons for these findings could be related to those of low retaking and missing marks related problems at the University. The results mean that graduate students pass their course works and therefore obtain good grades. 86 (88.7%) of the respondents also disagreed with the fact that lecturers delay marking and release results which contributes to low completion rate by graduate students at UCU. 2 (2.1%) of the respondents indicated that they were not sure while 9 (9.3%) agreed with the view that lecturers delay making and release of results.

On the view that frequent retaking at UCU destabilizes students' academic concentration leading to low completion, 61 (62.9%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 36 (37.1%) agreed. This means that students don't usually retake course at UCU. It could also imply that those who get retakes abandon the program and thus fail to complete whereas the 37.1% of the respondents who agreed could be representing the few who get back to retake and complete the programs they were admitted for.

On the question of whether all students who failed to complete since 2006 at UCU are given amnesty to go back and complete the programs, 21 (21.6%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 76 (78.4%) indicated that they were not sure. The majority of the respondents consenting that they were not sure, implies that most post graduate students are not given an opportunity to complete their studies after failing to do so within the recommended time. This also means that the financial requirements for completing graduate courses are even much more that what is required during the course period. The 21.6% who disagreed with the view justify the view that there exists no such a thing called Amnesty. During interviews with all the administrators reached during the study, no information was disclosed to the researcher about the provision for students who have lagged on the program beyond the acceptable time to come back and complete their studies.

When the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement that students who dislike class presentations and discussions, do not complete within their tenure, 19 (19.6%) of the respondents disagreed, 2 (2.1%) were not sure whereas 76 (78.3%) agreed. These results indicate the role of graduate students' commitment and effort towards completion of graduate programs. The 19.6% of those who disagreed with the view could be those who have been in contact with committed in terms of involvement in presentations and discussions but still fail to complete.

Respondents also agreed by the majority (57-58.8%) that exorbitant extension fees make students delay completion of graduate studies at UCU. Only 4 (4.1%) of the respondents indicated that they disagreed.

The respondents also agreed by majority (88-91.7%) that many graduate students delay to finish writing research proposals which is a requirement for research permit to collect data and write a final report thus this implies low rate of completion. Only 9 (9.3%) of the respondents disagreed.

This means that whereas graduate school students at UCU complete class works in time, research reports are delayed which leads to delayed course completion.

Basing on the findings elicited as seen above, it is construed that graduate students, completion rate at Uganda Christian University is low and the factors attributed to the low completion rate are diverse.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion, conclusions and recommendations within the context of the objectives and the corresponding research questions as outlined in chapter one. The chapter also presents suggested areas for further research.

5.1 Discussion of the major findings

5.1.1 The effect of University physical environment on graduate students' completion at UCU Mukono

From the study results as shown in section 4.2, it was established that UCU has got spacious lecture rooms equipped with adequate and comfortable seats. Further, the lecture rooms are well air-conditioned to facilitate graduate students' learning. Given such facilities, it would be expected that graduate students are provided with the necessary facilities to complete their graduate studies in time. But given the fact that this is not the case at UCU, the effect of physical environment can be said to be insignificant towards completion. This means that other factors must come into play to facilitate completion. These findings contradict previous study findings on this matter of investigation.

The University has got sufficient lecture rooms, University provide a conducive environment for learning, updated teaching/learning material, lecture rooms are clean and well air conditioned, furnished computer lab, internet access. This contradicts with the view according to Santhya et al. (2014) that University buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories and recreational facilities/

equipment are some of the elements in a learning environment which have been shown to influence students' achievement including program completion.

Jago & Tanner (2012) argues that class size is one of the most important infrastructures in the institutional environment because it helps to identify the student's teacher ratio. Teacher-student ratio is a variable that gives an indicator on the average of a class in an institutional setting which contradicts with the findings of the current study.

In addition whereas Abiodun (2008) reports that tertiary institutions don't put into consideration the number of students admitted whether the number is commensurate to the existing facilities or not, it was established in this study that UCU faces no issues with sufficient facilities given the fact that number of students admitted for post graduate studies is small beside those who actually report for the program being low.

Where Olufunke & Olubunmi (2016) asserts that the physical facilities in the University setting go a long way to motivate students to learn, at UCU, even with the physical facilities in place students' completion remains low. Owoeye, & Yara (2010) revealed that although facilities were adequately provided in some schools, they were not effectively utilized. He further emphasized on the need to ensure effective and efficient realization of the goals and objectives of the educational system. This could provide some explanation as to why even when the University has conducive physical facilities, the completion rate is low.

Edogi (2014), reported that safe and orderly classroom environment (aspect of instructional space), University facilities (accessories) were significantly related to students' academic performance in schools. Poor maintenance and ineffective ventilation systems lead to poor health among students as well as lecturers, which leads to poor performance and higher absentee rates (Omotere, Tope,

Omotere & Adunola, 2016). This could give explanation to low completion rate at some institutions of higher learning

Poor maintenance and ineffective ventilation systems lead to poor health among students as well as lecturers, which leads to poor performance and higher absentee rates according to Omotere et al. (2016). Whereas these factors can adversely affect student behavior and lead to higher levels of frustration among lecturers, and poor learning attitude among student, it is on the centrally at UCU.

5.1.2 The effect of staff diversity on post graduate students' completion

The findings in section 4.3 show that Mukono University has got experienced and qualified staff with ability to guide graduate school students to completion. Despite all this, completion rates are still low. Whereas other studies have linked staff diversity with graduate students' completion, the findings from this study contravene their findings. However, this could be accounted for by other factor that come into play to spar of deter completion.

Staff at UCU are highly qualified and qualified to facilitate graduate students' completion, which Sneyers & Witte (2014) say, is an effective remedy to low students' completion rates. In addition, it was also established in this study that staff at UCU are competent and possess the necessary skills to promote graduate students' completion. Based on Delany (2013), the characteristics of good supervisors who are approachable, friendly, supportive, have positive attitude, open minded, prepared to acknowledge error, organized, thorough, stimulating, conveys enthusiasm for research. This a contradiction with the current study findings.

It was also established that the teaching staff are regular and punctual in their work activities to meet the academic needs of the students. However, Barret (2005) reports that some lecturers in countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Gambia and Kenya were teaching not because of internal

motivation but rather due to lack of other openings elsewhere. This means they can be punctual and regular but deliver below expectation which limits students' ability to complete their studies.

5.1.3 The effect of graduate students' factors on completion rates

The findings presented in section 4.4 indicated that students' factors greatly affect their ability to complete in time and this is in line with the findings by other previous researchers.

It was established that graduate students at UCU are less involved in class presentations and discussion which makes them fail to catch up with their graduate studies. Demaris & Kristsonis (2008) reports that the class room may become the only place where students meet, where education in the formal sense is experienced. Failure to interact as post graduate students and as students and lecturers thus provides a possibility on not completing graduate studies in time

It was established that graduate students fail to complete in time because of job commitments. Besides, student who reside within the University have higher opportunities of completing in time as compared to those who commute. In a study by Cherastidtham & Notorn (2018), it was reported that 80% of the students who study part time have a high risk of failing to complete than full time.

In this study, it was established that graduate students at UCU fail to complete in time because they are self-sponsored thus facing financial challenges. Besides, it was also established that majority of the graduate students spend time working to meet their financial obligations. In addition, the exorbitant extension fees make students to fail to complete graduate studies at UCU. These findings are directly related to what was established by Wohlgemuth, et al. (2006), who studied financial, academic and environmental influences on retention and graduation of students.

Similar findings have been shown by various studies indicating that even though a learning environment is well equipped with physical facilities and qualified and experienced staff, the students themselves determine their success on a study program (Owoeye & Yara, 2011).

In this study, it was established that most graduate students delay to finish writing research proposals which is a requirement for research permit to collect data and write a final report thus this implies low rate of completion. This is in line with the findings by Ssegawa and Rwelamila (2009) who argue that lack of hand-on skills in the research process especially in the research definition and design stages accounts for low completion rates.

5.2 Conclusions

Basing on the study findings, the following conclusions are construed.

Whereas as university physical learning environment aspects such as spacious, well ventilated, equipped and adequately sized lecture rooms affect graduate students' completion of their study programs within the mandatory time at UCU, its effect is minimal.

Staff diversity at UCU affects graduate students' completion to a lesser extent. UCU has got highly qualified teaching staff who is also experienced therefore it would be expected that students complete their study programs in time. But the fact that completion rates are still low under diverse teaching staff justifies the fact that completion rate is affected by other factors and not staff diversity.

Graduate students' completion rate at UCU is affected by students' factors such as Job commitment, financial challenges, involvement in academic discussions and presentations to a large extent to a large extent. It was noted in this study that most of the graduate school students, fail to

concentrate on their study programs due to job commitments and financial difficulties, and yet post graduate studies press much more demands in terms of time. It therefore follows that since the students are busy catching up with job schedules, they fail to have time for discussions, research and interaction with academics that would enable them complete their studies in time.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion presented on the findings of the empirical, the following are some of the practical recommendations that can be advocated for, to promote graduate students' completion.

The University administration especially the Vice Chancellor , University Council, Heads of Department at Universities should ensure that they not only provide physical facilities in form of lecture rooms, libraries, laboratories, and halls or residents, emphasis should be placed on proper use of these facilities to facilitate students' completion. It was established that mere presence of physical facilities does not promote graduate students' completion.

Staff diversity was also shown to affect graduate students' completion to some extent. Therefore, it is recommended that, on top of having diverse teaching and management staff, the University Council, Vice Chancellor and Human Resource Management should work out on areas specifically that address research needs of graduate students. This study established that most of the students who fail to complete in time not because of class work but due failure to undertake research projects necessary for award of the final degree.

One of the students' factors found out to fail graduate students' completion in time is financial difficulties. It is therefore recommended that the Universities management committee student affair office work out programs to secure study and outsource research grants to relieve the student of the burden to look for finances that compels them to undertake full time jobs which reduces on their

commitment to the highly demanding study programs. It is also recommended that Universities management make a follow up on should on students who have dropped out of the program to ensure that they come back and complete the program.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Whereas this study explored the extent to which various aspects of the University learning environment affect graduate students' completion, a similar study covering both private and public Universities can be undertaken to compare the results and establish whether completion rates vary between different Universities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR POST GRADUATE STUDENTS

Dear respondent,

I am Nassimbwa Winfred currently undertaking a research study on the topic “*learning Environment and postgraduate completion rates in Uganda Christian University Mukono*” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master’s Degree in Education, policy Planning and Management.

The information sought is required specifically for academic purposes. Participation is entirely out of your volition. Your contribution is vital for the success of the aforesaid work. I request you to respond with truthfulness and honesty to the questions therein for the success of the purpose of this research. The information provided be treated with maximum confidentiality it deserves.

Thanks in Advance for your Participation

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please “**Tick**” where appropriate

1. Gender:

Male	Female

2. Your age group:

20-30 years	31-39 years	40-49 years	50 years and above

3. What course are you doing at the University and how long does it take?

Course:
Duration:

4. Your Admission Scheme:

Bachelors	Masters	Others (Specify)

5. What responsibility do you hold in the University?

.....

SECTION: B RESPONSE ON THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following observations on the scale of: 1.

Strongly disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (D), 3. Not sure (NS), 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly agree (SA).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		SD	D	NS	A	SA
	University Physical Environment	1	2	3	4	5
1	UCU has sufficient lecture rooms to enable efficient learning					
2	Spacious lecturer rooms in the University allow favorable study					

	environment					
3	Seats are adequate to encourage students attend lectures and complete in the statutory time					
4	Updated Teaching materials motivate lecturers to deliver to their best					
5	Lecture rooms are clean and well air conditioned for health learning					
7	Sharing of the limited computers make students retake and delay completion of course					
8	Students who reside in University halls complete on time					
9	Quality residential amenities provide conducive learning environment					
10	Internet access is everywhere to facilitate student research					
11	Active Participation in co-curricular activities enhances high completion rate					
12	The counseling and guidance services help students focus on academic goals.					
13	Attractive physical environment promotes students' completion rate of study programs.					

	University teaching Staff Diversity					
1	Lecturers qualifications are commensurate to the course units they teach					
2	Lecturers are well experienced to successfully guide the students to complete in time.					
3	Staff managerial competencies aid monitoring, supervision and evaluation to influence students' completion rate					
4	Staff administer leadership competencies in handling students' academic matters which encourage students to commit themselves to studies					
5	Lecturers' positive attitudes towards guiding and helping students on academic matters promote maximum completion rate					
6	Lecturers exhibit good interpersonal skills in handling academic matters providing an enabling learning environment.					
7	Lecturers' communication abilities enable students to clearly understand academic tasks and enhances completion rate					
8	Lecturers' personality is a determinant of student's completion of study.					

	STUDENTS RELATED FACTORS/CHARACTERISTICS -					
1	Students are less committed to their studies which makes them fail to complete in time					
2	Self-sponsored students face financial challenges thus lag on the program					
3	Graduate students are affected by job commitments					
4	Students who freely interact find it easy to complete their studies in the stipulated time					
5	Post-graduate courses demand demoralizes some students thereby delaying them on the program					
6	Students who have poor background at undergraduate level continue to have problems at postgraduate level as well					
	DEPENDENT VARIABLES	SD	D	U	A	SA
	COMPLETION RATE	1	2	3	4	5
1	Many students in UCU Graduate within the mandatory period					
2	Many final year students do retake course units after the final academic year					
3	Poor Performance in academic tasks delay mandatory completion period					

4	Delayed marking and release of results retards student completion rate					
5	Students who do not complete studies in the mandatory time possess low academic concentration					
6	UCU has a large number of students undertaking Amnesty across different programmes					
7	Class presentations, discussions, holding academic seminars and enhanced ICT utilization have improved the completion rate					
8	There is high outcry of exorbitant extension fees due to delayed completion					

Thank you.

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UCU TEACHING STAFF

Dear Respondent,

I am Nassimbwa Winfred currently undertaking a research study on the topic *“learning Environment and postgraduate completion rate in Uganda Christian University Mukono”* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master’s Degree education policy planning and management.

The information sought is required specifically for academic purposes. Participation is entirely out of your volition. Your contribution is necessary for the success of the aforesaid work. I request you to respond with truthfulness and honesty to the questions therein for the success of this research. The information provided be treated with maximum confidentiality it deserves.

Thanks for your cooperation

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tick / Fill in where appropriate

1. Gender:

Male		Female	
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2. Category of students you teach.

Certificate	Diploma	Bachelors	Masters	PhD

3. Years in service:

Between 1-5 years	Between 5-10 years	Between 10-15 years	Above 15years

4. Your level of education:

Diploma		Bachelor's Degree		Masters	
PhD		Others			

SECTION: B RESPONSE ON THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following observations on the scale of;

1- Strongly disagree (**SD**); 2- Disagree (**D**); 3- Not sure (**NS**); 4- Agree (**A**); 5- Strongly agree (**SA**).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Physical Environmental related factors	1	2	3	4	5
1. The libraries are spacious and well equipped to support students' reading and research					
2. Lecture rooms are adequately equipped for students to concentrate to finish in time					

3. Computer laboratories are well equipped so as to enhance students' completion rate					
4. Sanitation amenities affect students' completion rate					
5. University buildings attract and facilitate students' completion rate.					
6. University security facilitate students' completion rate.					
THE TEACHING STAFF DIVERSITY	SD	D	NS	A	SA
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Staff are well qualified to promote students' completion rate					
2. The lecturers are regular and punctual for lectures enhance students' completion rate.					
3. Staff possess competencies to promote students' completion rate.					
4. Staff have positive attitude towards assisting students complete their programs on time					
5. Staffs' interpersonal skills in relating with students favors students' completion rate.					
6. Effective staff communication skills foster					

students' completion rate.					
7. Staff customer care skills promote students' completion rate.					
8. Lecturers assessment of students promote completion rate					
STUDENTS RELATED FACTORS					
1. Students are less committed to their studies which makes them fail to complete in time					
2. Self-sponsored students face financial challenges thus lag on the program					
3. Graduate students are affected by job commitments					
4. Students who freely interact find it easy to complete their studies in the stipulated time					
5. Post-graduate courses demand demoralizes some students thereby delaying them on the program					
6. Students who have poor background at undergraduate level continue to have problems at postgraduate level as well					

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	SD	D	U	A	SA
COMPLETION RATE	1	2	3	4	5
1. Numerous students in UCU Graduate within the mandatory period					
2. Countless final year students fail to graduate due to missing marks and retake course units					
3. Poor coursework results fail graduation within mandatory completion period					
4. Lecturers delay marking and release of results attributing to low completion rate					
5. Frequent Retaking destabilizes students' academic concentration leading to low completion					
6. All students who failed to complete since 2006 are on Amnesty program					
7. Students who dislike Class presentations, discussions, do not complete within their tenure					
8. Exorbitant extension fees make students strike and delay their completion of studies					

9. A considerable number of students delay to finish writing the proposal which is a requirement to write a final report.					
10. Students, who do not defend the thesis in time, do not graduate in time.					

Thank you.

APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MANAGEMENT STAFF OF UCU

1. What constitutes the physical learning environment of Uganda Christian University Mukono?
2. What is the level of infrastructural development in meeting the demands of the current learning Environment of Uganda Christian University Mukono?
3. How frequent does Uganda Christian University Mukono conduct facility maintenance to enhance a conducive learning Environment?
4. What is the effect(s) of University physical learning environment on graduate students' completion rate at Uganda Christian University Mukono?
5. What does the University staffing structure reveal about the competencies of Uganda Christian University staff?
6. To what extent can you say that Uganda Christian University Mukono is equipped with qualified staff to handle postgraduate programs?
7. What challenges are faced by staff in a bid to make students realize their academic achievements in a prescribed time period?
8. How does staff competencies influence students' completion rate at Uganda Christian University Mukono?
9. What Human Resource gaps /capabilities hinder student completion of programs within the mandatory period?
10. To what extent do University students adhere or oblique/comply with the rules, regulations, and procedures?
11. How has Uganda Christian University Mukono management been able to address cases of students' indiscipline?

12. How do students' behaviors affect their completion rate at Uganda Christian University Mukono?
13. What is the role of University leadership in enhancing postgraduate completion rate?
14. In your own view what interventions can be implemented to enhance a conducive learning environment at Uganda Christian University Mukono?
15. What strategies can top management adopt or institute to enhance high student completion rate?

Thanks for your cooperation

APPENDIX IV: TIMELINES

ACTIVITY	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Proposal defense				
Field data collection				
Data analysis and Reporting				
Thesis defense				

APPENDIX V: BUDGET FRAME WORK -2017/18

<i>Inputs</i>		Cost	<i>Amount</i>
01	Materials <input type="checkbox"/> Stationery <input type="checkbox"/> Photocopy, typing, printing, binding and other secretarial services Sub-total	 230,000 500,000 	 730,000/=
02	Logistics <input type="checkbox"/> Transport, <input type="checkbox"/> Internet, <input type="checkbox"/> Telephones <input type="checkbox"/> Data analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Miscellaneous Sub total	 200,000 200,000 250,000 500,000 500,000 	 1,650,000/=
Grand Total (Ugx.)			2,380,000/=