



Completing One's Studies as a Social Process: The Experiences of Master's Students in Coping With Various Life Challenges

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Abstract

Completion of a master's degree program is determined not only by students' academic abilities but is also influenced by various social demands that accompany their lives. This study aims to understand the experiences of master's students in the Sociology program at the University of Riau as they navigate the process of completing their studies and to identify the dynamics of the interaction between personal and environmental factors that influence their academic journey. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research informants consisted of nine Master's students in Sociology who were in the process of completing their studies, as well as supporting informants from the program administration and academic advisors. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the completion of studies is a social process that takes place amid the interplay of various life demands. At the personal level, students face challenges such as fluctuations in motivation, psychological conditions, academic readiness, and time management skills. At the same time, on the environmental level students are faced with obligations of job, family duties, and the involvement in a range of social activities. The research results show that the experience of doing one's studies cannot be understood solely as an individual matter or solely as the consequence of external factors, but as a consequence of an interaction of students' personal capacities and the different social structures around them. This study contributes to enriching the field of sociology of higher education by demonstrating that the completion of graduate studies is a complex and multidimensional social process. The research findings also provide an empirical basis for strengthening academic support systems that are more responsive to students' needs and experiences.

Keywords: Completion of Studies; Social Processes; Master's Students; Sociology of Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a strategic role in producing high-quality human resources and supporting the social, economic, and cultural development of society. In recent years, Indonesia's higher education system has shown fairly positive progress, particularly in terms of student retention and completion rates. Data from the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology (Diktiristek) indicate that the percentage of students dropping out has continued to decline, while the quality of graduates has also shown a positive trend. These conditions suggest the better management of higher education, as well as the improved chances for students to finish their studies and get academic degrees. This trend indicates that graduation rates are a critical metric for institutions of higher education to track performance (Belando-Montoro et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, completing one's studies is not a simple process. Various studies show that students' academic journeys do not always follow a linear path in line with the ideal duration of study set by educational institutions (Syahriani & Sain, 2024). At the graduate level, students often face more complex situations than undergraduate students because they not only serve as students but also fulfill various other social roles, such as employees, partners, parents, family members, or members of specific communities. In this context, the completion of studies is not only related to an individual's academic ability but is also influenced by various interacting personal and environmental factors. Motivation, psychological well-being, self-regulation skills, work demands, family support, and the institutional environment are some of

the factors known to influence students' academic journeys in higher education (Kim, 2023; Muthukrishnan et al., 2022).

From a sociological perspective, the success and dynamics of completing one's studies cannot be understood solely as a result of individual ability. This happens in the complicated interaction between actors and the social systems around them. Students actively use diverse tactics of adaptation, negotiation and decision-making in the face of the pressures of academics, work, family and other aspects of social life. Thus, the completion of studies can be understood as a social process involving the interaction between students' subjective experiences and the various objective conditions that shape their daily lives.

The Master's Program in Sociology at the University of Riau provides an interesting context for understanding this phenomenon. Students enrolled in this program come from diverse social backgrounds, professions, age groups, and life experiences. Most students are individuals who have worked in various sectors, including government, education, the private sector, and community organizations. In addition to their academic activities, they also face various social responsibilities in their daily lives. This diversity means that each student's experience of completing their studies is not always uniform but is influenced by their distinct life contexts.

Based on the academic data for the study program, there is variation in the time it takes students to complete their studies across several cohorts. Some students are able to complete their studies within the planned timeframe, while others require more time because they must adapt to various demands that arise during their studies. These variations indicate that students' academic journeys unfold in diverse ways and do not always follow the same pattern. This situation is worth examining because it provides insight into how students interpret, manage, and balance the various social roles they assume while pursuing their master's degrees.

Although various studies have examined the factors influencing the completion of higher education, most research still focuses on identifying academic barriers, factors causing delays, or determinants of academic success. While these approaches are important, they often fail to explain how students subjectively experience, interpret, and manage the various demands of life while pursuing graduate studies. In fact, understanding students' experiences is crucial for explaining the social processes underlying their academic journeys. Therefore, further research is needed that positions students as social actors who actively negotiate the various demands of work, family, social environments, and educational institutions as they work toward completing their studies.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to understand the completion of studies as a social process experienced by master's students in sociology at the University of Riau. Specifically, this study explores students' experiences in coping with various academic, work, family, and other social demands, and explains how these factors interact to shape their journey toward completing their studies. This study is expected to contribute to the development of sociological research on higher education, particularly in understanding the relationship between individual experiences and social structures in graduate education. Furthermore, the study's findings are expected to serve as an empirical basis for strengthening an academic advising system that is more responsive to students' needs.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Master's students in Sociology at the University of Riau as they navigate the process of completing their studies amid various academic, work, family, and other social demands. This approach enables the researcher to investigate the meanings, subjective experiences, and social interactions that influence the students' academic experiences. The study is descriptively designed to describe the realities of the informants holistically, systematically, and contextually in accordance with the conditions they live. In its implementation, the researcher is the main instrument by personally carrying out observations, in-depth interviews, and collecting various documents related to the objective of the research.

Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account the informants' suitability for the research objectives. The criteria for informants included current

students in the Master's Program in Sociology at the University of Riau who were currently or had previously taken longer than the ideal study period to complete their studies, had never taken an academic leave of absence, and were willing to participate in the research. From the population of active students in the 2021–2024 cohorts, nine primary informants who met these criteria were identified. In addition, the study also involved supporting informants, consisting of the Program Coordinator and academic advisors, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the academic context and institutional support related to students' completion of their studies.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants and supporting informants, observations of students' academic activities, and field documentation. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from the academic archives of the study program, student statistical data, academic policy documents, and various sources of literature relevant to the topic of completing studies in higher education.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted systematically to understand the academic and social contexts surrounding students' lives. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using an interview guide that focused on students' experiences in completing their studies, including motivational dynamics, psychological conditions, time management, work demands, family responsibilities, social support, and experiences interacting with the academic environment. Documentation was used to supplement and reinforce the data from observations and interviews through various relevant documents, field notes, and archives.

In this investigation, source triangulation was used to verify data trustworthiness. Triangulation involved comparison of data from multiple informants including students, academic advisors and program administrators. The researcher was able to validate the data acquired through this approach and to ensure that the interpretation that was a result of the data was not one sided. Moreover, triangulation enhances the confidence level in the study findings and reduces the chances of subjective bias in the analysis process.

Data analysis was performed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The analysis was done concurrently with the data gathering procedure and continued until the completion of the study. The analysis started with data reduction, which is the process of choosing, reducing, simplifying and arranging data that are relevant to the research objective. The data were then categorized into topics that reflected students' experiences in finishing their studies, including academic motivation, psychological challenges, work pressures, family duties, social support, and techniques to manage the different roles students play.

The next stage is data presentation. This is the stage in which the researcher arranges the results of the data reduction into descriptive narratives, thematic matrices, and interview extracts that help the researcher to better comprehend the patterns of relationships among the topics. The presentation of data is done to ease the process of interpretation and comprehension of the experiences narrated by the informants.

The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification. At this stage, the researcher identifies patterns, relationships, and meanings that emerge from the various themes identified. Conclusions are formulated gradually through a process of interpretation that is continuously verified against field data, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the completion of studies as a social process shaped by the interaction between individual experiences and the various demands of life faced by students during their graduate studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Completing One's Studies Amid Life's Many Demands

The research findings indicate that completing a master's degree does not take place in an academic setting separate from students' daily lives. Rather, the process unfolds amid various demands that must be faced and managed simultaneously. For most of the informants, pursuing a master's degree is just one of many responsibilities they shoulder in their social lives. In addition to their role as students, they also serve as workers, family members, parents, partners, and individuals involved in various social and community activities. These

circumstances make the completion of their studies a process influenced not only by academic activities but also by the broader dynamics of life.

One of the most significant demands in the informants' experiences was their work. Most of the master's students in sociology at the University of Riau are individuals who have worked in various sectors, including government, education, the private sector, and community organizations. The professional responsibilities they undertake often require a significant allocation of time, energy, and attention. Several informants noted that busy work schedules, assignments outside their home regions, involvement in institutional activities, and even emergencies requiring their immediate presence often limit their ability to focus on writing their theses. Under such circumstances, students must constantly balance the demands of their jobs with their academic responsibilities, both of which are equally important to their lives.

In addition to work, family also plays a significant role in students' experiences of completing their studies. Some informants faced the responsibilities of raising children, supporting their partners, or caring for sick family members. In certain situations, family needs became a priority that could not be postponed, so time originally set aside for academic activities had to be redirected to fulfill domestic responsibilities. These findings indicate that family life cannot be separated from the process of completing one's studies. Students are not only required to fulfill their academic obligations but must also maintain the social roles they play within their family environment.

Other demands stem from students' involvement in various social and community activities. Some informants are active in religious activities, community service, social organizations, and activities related to their professions. This participation is not seen as a burden but rather as an aspect of moral and societal responsibilities that have to be fulfilled. However, these social activities still need time and energy which will ultimately impact the time for academic endeavors. This circumstance indicates that the master's students do not live in an isolated social environment, but are integrated in the network of social ties which constantly needs their participation.

In addition to these various external demands, students also face significant academic challenges. The process of writing a thesis, collecting data, conducting research analysis, publishing scientific papers, and interacting with academic advisors requires a high level of academic commitment. For students who have been away from formal education for a long time, these academic demands often require a process of readjustment to academic culture, scientific writing skills, the use of research-supporting technology, and an understanding of scientific publication standards. Thus, academic demands are not only related to the completion of coursework but also concern students' ability to adapt to academic expectations at the graduate level.

Based on these findings, it is clear that completing a master's degree is a process that takes place amid various interrelated demands of life. Work, family, social activities, and academic demands do not exist in isolation but rather influence one another in students' daily lives. Therefore, completing one's studies cannot be understood solely as a matter of individual academic ability but must be viewed as a social process involving students' efforts to balance the various roles and responsibilities they undertake simultaneously.

Students' Personal Dynamics in Pursuing Graduate Studies

In addition to facing various demands of life stemming from their work environment, family, social activities, and academic commitments, students also experience various personal dynamics that influence their journey toward completing their studies. Research findings indicate that the experience of completing one's studies is determined not only by external conditions but also by how students interpret the situations they face, manage their emotions, maintain their motivation, and build confidence in their own abilities. In other words, the process of completing one's studies is an experience that involves complex psychological and personal dimensions.

One of the most common personal dynamics that emerged in the informants' experiences was fluctuations in motivation. Some students admitted that their passion to complete their studies was not always the same over their college years. There comes a point at which they tend to lose motivation, particularly when they are writing their thesis and having a hard time or when they are going through many revisions. This circumstance makes them

to lessen the intensity of their thesis work and to have a tendency to procrastinate academic responsibilities. These findings suggest that motivation is not a stable state, but rather something that is continually changing depending on the events and situations that graduate students encounter throughout their graduate studies.

Not only motivation is the key factor in the student experience, but psychological well-being is also a critical one. Some interviewees stated that the long academic process caused them mental strain, especially when they dealt with rejected proposals, frequent changes, or uncertainty in the direction of their research. Such circumstances sometimes resulted in emotions of frustration, a decline in enthusiasm, and a need to temporarily withdraw from academic pursuits. For some informants, this condition developed into a tendency toward overthinking, the habit of excessively dwelling on various possibilities of mistakes or failure before taking action. As a result, students spent more time considering various possibilities than actually completing their academic work.

Another dynamic identified in this study is low academic self-confidence. Several informants expressed doubts about their ability to select a research topic, draft a proposal, conduct data analysis, or write a scientific paper. These doubts often led students to redo work they had already completed or even delete what they had written because they felt it was not good enough. This situation indicates that students' academic experiences are influenced not only by their technical abilities but also by their confidence in those abilities. When self-confidence declines, the process of completing their studies tends to slow down because students have difficulty making decisions and maintaining consistency in their work.

This study also found that academic readiness is an important part of students' personal dynamics. Several informants who had taken a fairly long break from their studies before continuing on to the master's level admitted that they had to readjust to the academic culture. They needed to relearn various skills related to research, academic writing, reference management, and the use of research support software. This adaptation process required a considerable amount of time and energy. In some cases, limited academic readiness at the start of their studies affected students' self-confidence and added to the burden they faced while completing their graduate education.

In the end, time management skills are also a crucial aspect of the student experience. The various demands that arise simultaneously require students to set priorities and allocate their time effectively. However, not all students possess the same ability to do so. Some students are able to schedule their activities in a well-organized manner and are consistent in their academic activities. Some students are unable to keep themselves disciplined with their studies given the demands of employment and family life. These differences in time-management skills indicate that the experience of completing one's studies is influenced not only by the number of activities that must be carried out but also by an individual's capacity to organize those activities.

These findings indicate that the completion of studies by master's students is not merely an academic matter but also involves various personal dynamics that unfold throughout the educational process. Motivation, psychological state, self-confidence, academic readiness, and time management skills interact with one another to shape students' experiences. Therefore, understanding the completion of studies requires attention not only to the external demands students face but also to their subjective experiences and personal capacities in coping with these demands.

Strategies Students Use to Balance Their Various Social Roles

Research findings indicate that master's students in sociology at the University of Riau not only face various life demands but also develop a range of strategies to ensure the continuity of their studies. These strategies emerge as a form of adaptation to the situations they face daily, particularly when students must juggle multiple social roles simultaneously. They have to be constantly changing as workers, as family members and as students, so that they can carry out each of their tasks without having to totally give up the others.

One of the most popular tactics is flexible time management. Some informants spend time outside of work hours on their thesis, for example in the evening, on the weekend or whenever they take a break from work. These are the main opportunities for students with busy job schedules to continue their study and thesis writing. While this approach may not

always yield immediate results, it allows students to have continuity in their academic work amidst the different demands on them.

Students often use ways to modify their priorities in terms of time management. Sometimes people may decide to focus their attention on the most pressing concerns, and then turn their attention to academic pursuits when circumstances allow. This technique implies that pupils do not always manage to juggle all their duties simultaneously. Instead of assuming one job and following through with it, they are constantly negotiating the multiple demands they confront, balancing the repercussions and urgency of each function they assume. Here the completion of studies is not a linear procedure but a matter of repeated adaptations to the changing life conditions.

They also discovered another method, which was to draw on social support from their immediate circle. Some informants were assisted by their partners, family members, college friends, and coworkers in relieving the stress they encountered. This support took numerous forms ranging from help with home duties, inspiration and exchange of academic knowledge, to create a more conducive environment and time for studying. The social support gave them more resources to keep their dedication to studying even in a high pressure circumstance.

In an academic context, students also develop strategies by establishing more intensive communication with their academic advisors and program administrators. Some informants strive to schedule advising sessions more regularly, utilize online communication tools, and seek out various additional learning resources to overcome the challenges they face. These strategies demonstrate that students do not rely solely on their individual abilities but also take advantage of available institutional resources to support the completion of their studies.

Interestingly, the various strategies developed by the students did not always eliminate all the difficulties they faced. Nevertheless, these strategies enabled them to remain engaged in the academic process despite being in complex situations. These findings show that master's students are not inert entities in the face of life's demands, but rather social actors that actively adapt, negotiate and make decisions in an effort to balance the numerous roles they play.

From a sociological perspective, these various strategies reflect agents' ability to respond to the constraints and opportunities that arise within the social structures surrounding them. Students are not entirely determined by their jobs, families, or academic demands, but possess the capacity to develop various ways to ensure the continuity of their studies. Therefore, the completion of studies can be understood as the result of a continuous process of negotiation between the various demands of life and students' ability to manage and balance their various social roles.

Completing One's Studies as a Social Process: The Interaction of Personal and Structural Factors

The research findings indicate that the completion of studies by master's students in sociology at the University of Riau cannot be understood solely as a result of individual academic ability or as a direct consequence of various environmental pressures. The completion of studies is a social process shaped by the dynamic interaction between students' personal factors and the various social structures that surround their lives. In this context, students do not merely function as individuals pursuing an education, but also as social actors who are constantly interacting with the various demands and expectations originating from their surrounding environment.

On a personal level, students bring with them various resources and limitations that influence their academic journey. Motivation, self-confidence, psychological well-being, academic readiness, and time management skills are factors that help determine how they respond to the various situations they face while pursuing graduate studies. However, these factors do not operate in isolation or independently. Students' personal circumstances constantly interact with the various social realities they encounter in their daily lives.

At the structural level, students are embedded in a complex network of social relationships. Work demands, family responsibilities, involvement in social and religious activities, as well as academic rules and policies are all part of the social structure that shapes their experiences during their studies. This structure can serve as a source of support that helps students complete their studies, but at the same time, it can also be a source of demands

that drain their time, energy, and attention. Therefore, no two students' experiences of completing their studies are ever exactly the same, as each individual faces a different configuration of social structures.

The research findings indicate that the relationship between personal and structural factors is reciprocal. High academic demands, for example, do not always result in the same academic experience for every student. Students who are well motivated, can self-regulate, and have sufficient social support are better equipped to adjust to such challenges. On the other hand, students with psychological weariness, lack of self-confidence or difficulties managing their time are more likely to encounter barriers to continuing their studies. These findings suggest that the influence of social structures on academic completion is significantly shaped by students' personal capacity to respond to the various demands they face.

Conversely, students' personal circumstances cannot be separated from the influence of their social environment. Low motivation, psychological exhaustion, and declining self-confidence often do not arise suddenly as individual problems, but develop through experiences of dealing with work pressures, family conflicts, high academic demands, and various other social experiences. Thus, personal and structural factors form a mutually influential relationship that persists continuously throughout the educational process.

These findings show that completing one's studies is not a linear process, but rather a social process filled with negotiation, adaptation, and decision-making. Students actively strive to balance the various roles they play as workers, family members, community members, and students. In this process, they not only face various constraints stemming from their social environment but also develop various strategies to ensure the continuity of their studies. Therefore, the successful completion of studies cannot be understood solely as the result of individual effort but rather as a product of the interaction between students' personal capacities and the various structural conditions that shape their lives.

From a sociological perspective, these findings confirm that graduate students' experiences reflect a close relationship between agency and structure. Students have the capacity to act, make decisions, and develop adaptive strategies; however, these actions always take place within the limits of opportunities and constraints shaped by their social environment. Thus, completing a master's degree can be understood as a social process that arises from an ongoing negotiation between individual capabilities and the various demands of the surrounding environment.

Institutional Support for Helping Students Complete Their Studies

Research findings indicate that students' completion of their studies is influenced not only by personal factors and the various life demands they face, but also by the institutional support provided by their academic programs and universities. From a sociological perspective on education, educational institutions are part of a structure that plays a crucial role in creating an environment that enables students to continue their studies. Therefore, successful completion of studies cannot be understood solely as the result of individual effort, but also as the result of interactions between students and the support systems available within the academic environment.

The research findings indicate that the Master's Program in Sociology at the University of Riau has developed various forms of academic and non-academic support to help students complete their studies. One form of support provided is intensive communication between the program and students. Through more structured and ongoing communication, the program strives to monitor students' academic progress while identifying the various challenges they face. The existence of open communication channels allows students to obtain clearer information regarding the academic steps they must take and provides them with an opportunity to voice any difficulties they experience during the process of completing their studies.

In line with this intensive communication, the program also provides various forms of academic mentoring tailored to students' needs. This mentoring includes research guidance, consultations on thesis writing, and support for the scientific publication process. Research findings indicate that the needs of students in the final stages of their studies are not limited to completing their research but also include the ability to write scientific articles, select appropriate journals, and understand the academic publication process. The availability of

these support programs is crucial because they help students bridge the gaps in knowledge and skills that can hinder the completion of their studies.

Institutional support is also provided in the form of personal counselling services in which students can address various academic and non-academic difficulties with more openness. For some students these counselling sessions are a crucial way to get direction, moral support and solutions to the numerous problems they experience. Research results suggest that problems that affect the completion of studies are not only confined to academic problems but also include psychological well-being, family ties, and work stress. Therefore, a targeted and humanistic approach is crucial to enhance student achievement.

Moreover, the existence of the Complaints, Counseling, and Health Corner (P2K) service demonstrates that support for students is not only focused on academic aspects but also on psychosocial aspects. This service provides a space for students to seek help when facing emotional stress, mental fatigue, or various personal issues that could potentially affect their studies. Research findings indicate that psychological well-being is one of the factors closely linked to students' ability to continue their studies. Therefore, the availability of counseling services is a vital component of the support system needed by graduate students.

The findings of this study show that effective institutional support is not only focused on resolving academic issues but also takes a more comprehensive approach to students' social and psychological well-being. An approach that combines academic mentoring, intensive communication, personal counseling, and psychosocial support demonstrates the institution's efforts to create a learning environment that is more responsive to students' needs. Thus, the successful completion of studies can be understood as the result of the interaction between students' individual capacities and the structural support provided by educational institutions.

In the context of this study, the Master's Program in Sociology at the University of Riau has demonstrated efforts to establish a mentoring system that serves not only as a mechanism for academic oversight but also as a form of social support for students. This finding reinforces the argument that successful completion of graduate studies requires the active involvement of various parties, including students as agents and educational institutions as structures that provide the necessary resources, opportunities, and support throughout the educational process.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the completion of studies by master's students in sociology at the University of Riau is a social process that takes place amid various interacting life demands. Students not only fulfill the role of learners but also that of workers, family members, and members of the community with diverse social responsibilities. These conditions make the completion of studies a complex process that cannot be understood solely as an academic issue.

Research findings indicate that students' experiences in completing their studies are shaped by the interaction between personal and structural factors. At the personal level, motivation, psychological state, self-confidence, academic readiness, and time-management skills are aspects that influence students' academic journeys. Meanwhile, at the structural level, work demands, family responsibilities, involvement in social activities, and the academic environment also shape their experience of completing their studies. These two groups of factors do not operate in isolation; rather, they influence one another and create different dynamics for each student.

This study also found that students are not passive actors when facing the various demands of life. They learn different coping techniques such as flexible time management, prioritizing, using social support and keeping in touch with their academic advisers and their academic programs to assure their study continuity. These strategies demonstrate students' capacity to navigate the various demands they face while pursuing their graduate studies.

In order to help students complete their studies, institutional support plays a crucial role alongside personal factors and individual strategies. The Master Program in Sociology at the University of Riau provides a support system for students to overcome various problems in their studies, such as academic mentorship, personal counseling, intense communication, and psychosocial support services. These findings indicate that successful completion of studies

is not solely determined by students' individual capabilities but is also influenced by the structural support available within the educational environment.

The study emphasizes that the completion of a master's degree is the result of a dynamic interaction between students' personal capacities and the various social structures that shape their lives. Therefore, efforts to support students' academic success must be undertaken through a holistic approach, that is, by strengthening individual capacities while providing an academic environment that is responsive to the needs and realities of graduate students' lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be proposed to support graduate students in completing their studies. First, students need to make an effort to improve their time-management skills, build academic discipline, and develop adaptation strategies suited to their individual life circumstances. Students need to realize that successfully completing their studies depends not only on academic ability but also on the ability to balance various social roles they play as workers, family members, and members of the community. Likewise, realistic planning of study schedules and the use of social support from family, friends and the academic community are key to the continuance of their studies.

Second, the existing academic advising system in the Master's Program in Sociology at the University of Riau needs to be continuously improved and developed. Academic mentorship should cover not just thesis writing and scientific publications, but also psychological and social needs of students. The program offers a more proactive academic monitoring program, expands personal counseling services, and enhances the combination of academic mentoring with psychosocial services so that students receive more comprehensive assistance during their graduate studies.

Third, for higher education institutions in general, the findings of this study emphasize the necessity of creating an academic climate that is receptive to the different backgrounds and experiences of graduate students. Flexible academic policies, the use of technology in the advising process, and the provision of easily accessible psychological and academic support services can be part of a strategy to support the academic success of students who have various responsibilities outside the campus environment.

Fourth, for future researchers, this study is still limited to the experiences of students in a single degree program and employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Therefore, follow-up research could be conducted in different degree programs or universities to gain a broader understanding of the dynamics of completing graduate studies. Additionally, future research could develop more specific approaches, such as studies on academic resilience, social support, students' psychological well-being, or the relationship between work roles and academic success in the context of higher education.

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