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## Research Article

### Challenges and Opportunities Encountered by the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) Students in Cotabato City

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the needs and problems in conducting research among the MAED students of Higher Education Institutions in Cotabato City Graduate Schools. It utilized the descriptive-quantitative type of research, and it was conducted in the selected college and universities-graduate schools in Cotabato City. The study's respondents were the forty-four (44) Master of Arts in Education graduating students for 2015-2016. The study employed total enumeration as a sampling technique. A survey questionnaire was generated upon reviewing the related literature and other secondary sources such as research articles and journals. The study's statistical tools used frequency and percentage counts, mean, and the grand mean.

The needs of the MAED students in conducting research were perceived as "needed," while the level of difficulties encountered by the MAED students was perceived as "difficult."

Financial aspects were seen as a hindrance to their research work. Likewise, a school offering graduate college in the city has equipped a library to give students access to the research materials they need. Similarly, there is still a need to develop the student's skills in conducting research. Students conducting research were it hard to manage their time while most of them were married and at the same time working.

It is recommended that research subjects be emphasized to students taking research courses. There should be an organized schedule for students to consult closely with their adviser. The graduate studies program in the city should strengthen its research program.

**Keywords:** *Difficulties, Research, Higher Education Institutions, MAED Students, Needs*

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## Introduction

The necessity to conduct research is of the utmost importance since it allows young scholars to participate in a community of learning, gaining experience in independent thought, teamwork, leadership, and communication while working under the supervision of a faculty member (Salendab, et.al 2021).

Conducting research is considered vital to the educational growth of students. It has proven helpful in identifying issues, problems, and conflicts and in providing solutions to problems in school and the workplace.

In addition, research encourages students' interest in research, resulting in their research initiatives in research-based practice. Graduate student-researchers consult experts, apply for grants, deliver conference papers, write for periodicals, participate in clubs, and network or collaborate with peer mentors or faculty mentors to achieve their research objectives. It is ethical and has a positive effect on people's lives. This remark emphasizes that research is crucial to the growth of the community, the school, and, most importantly, the individual.

Moreover, research or thesis is an academic paper demonstrating a candidate's ability to conduct independent research and is required as part of an academic program. After completing the required coursework and passing all examinations, graduate school students must submit a research paper or thesis as the final requirement before receiving their degree.

However, as observed, most students in Higher Education Institutions in Cotabato City encounter numerous obstacles when writing this important academic paper.

Consequently, there is a need to investigate these various student issues. In addition, research methodology is a study subject in some graduate courses; however, students still need to familiarize themselves with the significance of research and the rationale for including it in the curriculum.

Most students enjoy conducting research, but some need help understanding it because research methodology is a complex subject to grasp.

Similarly, research can be both challenging and rewarding. Graduate students frequently

demonstrate mastery of their primary subject and the ability to overcome psychological, bureaucratic, and academic obstacles.

Most authors published a revealing discussion on both frustration and seizing opportunities. They suggest that students anticipate psychological problems, understand their reasons for conducting research early on, and share their ideas with faculty, graduate students, and other members of the profession. Students who conduct research primarily at a university or campus typically face unique bureaucratic, communications, logistical, and academic challenges. Some authors identified several requirements for conducting thesis research successfully. These requirements included adequate financial support, careful planning, and on-site researcher supervision.

The survey also revealed that cultural adaptation could be problematic regardless of the student's personality or language proficiency and that adaptability and independence were deemed more important than prior training and experience. People typically view research as complex due to the difficulties encountered while conducting it. Research is not insurmountable; instead, it is simple and motivating. However, it is necessary to highlight the obstacles that stand in the way of research.

With this context, it is highly indispensable to look into the different barriers or challenges/difficulties faced by the researchers of the Master of Arts in Education in Cotabato City Graduate Schools, as well as the needs in conducting the research.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the principle of Mamun Habib et al. (2014) in their book entitled "Research Methodology - Contemporary Practices" and on the concept of Sharma (2010). According to them, a research problem is an issue or concern that an investigator presents and justifies in a research study; hence, conducting scientific research is subject to certain limits. They added that new academic and corporate researchers face difficulties pursuing any research project due to a lack of knowledge in the field of research methodology. In general, initiating a research project, picking a

specialized issue, deciding on suitable instruments and procedures, organizing paper publishing, and presenting the findings create obstacles. The writers illuminate the phenomenon of research methodology based on contemporary approaches with complete knowledge. The writers provide solutions to numerous unresolved problems that may arise throughout the academic study.

They also stressed that challenges are a normal part of pursuing research work. However, it is possible to overcome those challenges and difficulties through self-motivation, dedication, ethical knowledge in the field of research, discussions with experts around problem identification, and exercising patience while gathering research data.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study aimed to determine the needs and problems in conducting research among the MAED students of Higher Education Institutions in Cotabato City Graduate Schools.

Specifically, this study sought to find answers to (1) the needs of the MAED students in conducting research and (2) the extent of difficulties encountered by the MAED students in conducting research.

### **Methods**

This study made use of the quantitative type of research employing the descriptive survey method. It utilized the questionnaire, observation, and interview to obtain the data for this study. This method is considered appropriate because the study aims to determine the challenges and opportunities in conducting research among the Master of Arts in Education students of Higher Education Institutions in Cotabato City.

This study was conducted in the selected college and universities-graduate schools in Cotabato City, such as the Cotabato City State

Polytechnic College (CCSPC)-Graduate College, Shariff Kabunsuan College, and Notre Dame University (NDU)-Graduate School. The study's respondents are the Master of Arts in Education graduating students officially enrolled in the thesis course for this year, 2015-2016, in the selected state college and university in Cotabato City Graduate Schools. Each institution has more than ten MAED graduating students who are officially enrolled in the thesis course. Universal sampling was employed as the research sampling technique.

A survey questionnaire is used as the instrument of this study. The items in this questionnaire were formulated upon reviewing the related literature. The questionnaire contained the profile of the students as well as the various typical problems/challenges encountered by the researchers in conducting research.

The questionnaire has two parts. The first part will consist of items intended for the profile of the MAED students, such as age, gender, civil status, and the number of hours of Research Training/Seminars/ Workshops Attended.

The second part consists of items intended to determine the typical problems MAED students encounter in conducting research and the extent of the difficulties in conducting their study.

The self-made questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability. For the instrument's content validity, this was submitted to the panel member for suggestions and recommendations to improve the content of the self-made questionnaire. This self-made questionnaire It was also pilot tested to the 30 % population of the MAED students taking research subject. 0.96 Cronbach's Alpha was determined, which is interpreted as valid and reliable..

This study used SPSS to analyze the data. Statistical tools were the frequency and percentages counts, mean, and grand mean.

### **Result and Discussion**

*Table 1. Needs of the MAED Students in Conducting Research*

Item	Mean	Description
1. Financial	3.07	Needed
2. Library Holding	2.41	Least Needed
3. Research Capability	3.33	Needed

Item	Mean	Description
4. Time Management	2.78	Needed
5. Professors' Expertise	2.62	Needed
Grand Mean	2.84	Needed

Table 1 shows the needs of the MAED students in conducting research. As seen in this table, financial was rated 3.07), described as needed. This means that the respondents revealed during the personal interview conducted by the researcher that finances are one of the pre-requisite for conducting research. More is needed for the research to be ready academically. What is essential is their still enough budget allocated for the research. In terms of library holdings, respondents revealed that library holding is a less problem because the library is equipped with reading materials that could help them find the review of literature and studies. This was manifested by the mean score of 2.41, described as "least needed." Research capability got a mean score of 3.33, described as "needed." This figure entails that the respondents need knowledge and skills to write research or a thesis. They need to be equipped with the newest trend in research writing so that they can write research effectively and productively.

Similarly, time management was rated 2.78, described as needed, which means that writing research requires ample time, timeline, and work plan to write and finish the research or thesis. At the same time, professors' expertise is needed to finish the research work effectively. Such needs include an adviser, reader, statistician, screening committee, and consultant.

Generally, the grand mean of 2.84, described as "needed," suggests that these variables are needed to effectively and productively finish the thesis or research output. This also suggests that the researcher should employ time management to finish it on time.

The obstacles experienced by researchers are time and money, which are regarded as one of the most significant issues they encountered during their research. Sharma (2010) stated that time is money, and if time is lost, money is also lost. Throughout a study project, time is wasted gathering information from diverse sources.

Table 2. Level of Difficulties Encountered by the MAED Students in Conducting Research

Item	Mean	Description
1. Identification of the Problem	3.28	Difficult
2. Organizing Literature	2.43	Less Difficult
3. Analyzing and Interpreting the Data	2.92	Difficult
4. Publication of Research Output	2.81	Difficult
Grand Mean	2.86	Difficult

Table 2 reflects the level of difficulties encountered by the MAED students in conducting research. As reflected, the problem identification got a mean score of 3.28, described as "difficult." This means that MAED students conducting research need help in problem identification. This might be because they need a foundation in research writing, which may cause them to identify the problem in conducting research.

The respondents rated "less difficult" as the difficulties encountered by the MAED students, with a mean score of 2.43, described as "less

difficult." In terms of analyzing and interpreting the data, respondents rated 2.92, described as "difficult." This implies that respondents need help in analyzing and interpreting data. They need to be equipped with the necessary research knowledge and skills in interpreting data. This might be because they need enthusiasm or the foundation needs to be stronger.

Similarly, the publication of research output was identified as complex among MAED students undertaking research courses. This was manifested by the mean score of 2.81, described as "difficult." This means that the

respondents must be fully aware of the research output publication. It is also difficult for them to identify a reputed scientific indexing journal from fake journals.

The grand mean of 2.86, described as "difficult," means that MAED students have real difficulty conducting research. This further means they have difficulty because they need foundation knowledge on identifying the problem, literature organization, analysis, and interpretation of data. This also means they must learn to publish their research outputs in highly reputed indexed journals.

The findings are supported by Mamun Habib et al. (2014), who said that the first challenge for scientific research is identifying the research problem, which then leads to formulating the research problem. These questions are the basis for the entire research and determine its attractiveness, the methodology to be applied, its adequacy, and its importance within the study subject. Formulating the issue entails defining an objective, demonstrating its relevance, identifying any existing work on the subject, its contemporary or future significance, and the availability and accessibility of the necessary data.

In this area, most students may need to correct the errors of using too many direct quotes, writing summaries of publications, or expressing their thoughts. Maria emphasized that the literature review allows the researcher to back their claims with evidence and display their knowledge of the research problem. In addition, it is required to cite all sources used by the researcher in this part.

Poor planning and time management are also typical when conducting research. Maria (2010) cited that, in most instances, universities give students adequate time to write their thesis. This is a lengthy process for most students who need help managing their time well. However, time passes rapidly, and the researcher may encounter delays from mentors or supervisors that were not anticipated.

## Conclusion

Financial aspects still need to be considered a hindrance to their research work. Likewise, a school offering graduate college in the city

needs to equip their library to give students access to the research materials they need. Similarly, there is still a need to develop the student's skills in conducting research.

Students conducting research need help to manage their time while most of them are married at the same time working. The students need expert services to guide them on what to do in their research.

On the technical aspect of research writing, the students found it difficult for them. There is still a need for them to undergo a workshop on research writing.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that research subjects be emphasized to students taking research courses. There should be an organized time schedule for students to consult closely with their adviser, and the graduate studies program in the city should strengthen their research program.

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