

Self-Management, Research and Institutional Support in Timely Graduation: A Systematic Literature Review

Wenti Arum Widasari^{1*}, I Made Sukresna¹

¹ Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia
wentiarum08@gmail.com

Abstract

Timely graduation is one of the important indicators in measuring the effectiveness of education. However, its achievement is still a challenge in many institutions. This study aims to explore the influence of self-management, research skills, and institutional support on the timely graduation of master's students using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method covering the period 2010 to 2025. The results of the analysis of various literature and scientific articles show that these three variables have a significant influence on research success. Self-management plays a role in managing time and academic responsibility, research skills determine the smoothness of thesis preparation, and institutional support provides an external foundation in the form of policies, facilities, and academic services that support the lecture process. This study concludes that the synergy between internal and external factors of students is key in encouraging an increase in the rate of timely permission. The practical implications of these findings provide recommendations for higher education institutions in designing academic mentoring programs and policy strategies that are more responsive to student needs.

Keywords

Institutional Support, Synergy, Self-Management, Timely Graduation.

1. Introduction

Timely graduation is one of the important indicators in assessing the effectiveness of higher education, especially at the postgraduate level. Not only does it reflect the discipline and academic capacity of students, but timely graduation is also a benchmark for institutional efficiency in supporting successful studies. In the context of national policy, timely graduation contributes to the achievement of the Higher Education (Indikator Kinerja Utama/IKU).

Higher education institutions are determined to improve the quality of education and increase efficiency in the academic field. One of the main challenges faced is the low percentage of on-time graduation of master's program students. Based on internal academic data from "XYZ" University, the percentage of master's students who graduated on time in the 2018-2022 period is still relatively fluctuating and low. The following table presents related data:

Table 1. Graduation Data of Master's Program Students at "XYZ" University (Entry Year 2018-2022)

Year of Entry	The Number of New Students	Timely graduation	Not Graduating on Time	On Time Graduation Rate
2018	70	28	42	40.00 %
2019	71	37	34	52.11%
2020	142	29	113	20.42%
2021	133	69	64	51.89%

From these data, it can be seen that timely graduation has not reached the ideal figure, even in the 2020 class only 20.42% of students managed to complete their studies in two years. This condition raises an urgent need to identify factors that influence late graduation. Recent literature reviews reveal that there are three main factors that consistently contribute to timely graduation, namely: self-management, research skills, and institutional support. Master's students are required to have the ability to manage time, set priorities, and manage academic pressure and non-academic responsibilities. On the other hand, mastery of adequate research skills including in designing methodologies, processing data and compiling scientific report is also a major determinant of study success. No less important, support from institutions in the form of flexible academic policies, effective guidance, and supporting infrastructure such as journal access, digital services, and study progress monitoring systems also influence student graduation (Alwaini & Tarmidi, 2024).

However, research that combines these three factors simultaneously in the postgraduate context in Indonesia is still limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to systematically review (Systematic Literature Review) the trends and empirical findings of various academic literature published in the last fifteen years. This study is expected to form a conceptual framework that is useful for further research and become the basis for strategic policy recommendations in improving

academic efficiency and accelerating the graduation of master's students in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

Self-management is an individual's ability to manage activities, thoughts, emotions, and time effectively in order to achieve predetermined goals. In the context of postgraduate students, self-management is crucial because most of the learning and thesis writing processes require high independence (Rizki & Priyadi, 2025). According to Ardini (2017), students who have good self-management skills tend to be able to avoid academic procrastination and complete their studies on time. Zhao et al. (2023) stated that self-management plays an important role in increasing self-efficacy, which ultimately has an impact on academic achievement and graduation. Students who are able to manage their time, set academic priorities, and be consistent with their learning targets have a greater chance of completing their studies within the specified time.

Self-management consists of four key aspects: self-motivation, self-organization, self-control, and self-development. Self-motivation is an internal drive that fosters interest and a strong desire to learn, making it easier for individuals to concentrate and carry out activities consistently. Self-organization refers to the ability to efficiently manage one's thoughts, energy, and time to achieve optimal results. Self-control reflects a conscious effort to build determination, overcome doubts, and direct energy toward completing tasks without harming others. Meanwhile, self-development is the process of enhancing self-awareness and exploring one's potential so that individual abilities can grow and improve across various aspects of life.

According to Willison and O'Regan (2006), research skills are a set of abilities essential for designing, implementing, analyzing, and presenting scientific work, as outlined in the Research Skill Development (RSD) framework. The framework begins with the Embark and Clarify stage, where researchers identify problems, explore relevant phenomena, and formulate clear research questions. This is followed by the Find and Generate stage, which involves gathering relevant data and information from both primary and secondary sources to address the research questions. In the Evaluate and Reflect stage, researchers assess the quality and relevance of the collected information and reflect on the process to improve their research direction. The next stage is Organize and Manage, which focuses on the systematic organization of data and efficient management of time, resources, and documentation. After that, in the Analyse and Synthesise stage, researchers analyze data in-depth and integrate insights from various sources to produce new knowledge. Finally, in the Communicate and Apply stage, the emphasis is on effectively presenting research findings to the intended audience and applying the results to solve real-world issues. This structured approach ensures that research is not only methodologically sound but also impactful and relevant.

Sidhu et al. (2023) emphasized that the ability to read critically, develop appropriate methodology, and process data systematically are the main determinants of the speed of completion of postgraduate studies. The ability to read critically allows students to deeply understand various relevant literatures, identify research gaps, and develop a strong theoretical framework. The development of an appropriate methodology ensures that research has a clear direction, high validity, and is able to answer the problem formulation accurately. Meanwhile, the ability to process data systematically supports logical and evidence-based analysis, which ultimately accelerates the process of writing and compiling research results. These three aspects are interrelated and form an important foundation for postgraduate students in completing their studies on time and with quality.

Institutional support encompasses all academic facilities, policies, and services provided by universities to enhance student success, as emphasized by Tinto (1993) and Andriani (2024). This support includes policy support through clear and consistent regulations that accommodate student needs, such as flexible thesis preparation and effective curriculum integration. Human resource support involves ensuring that educators and staff are professional, well-trained, and capable of delivering quality academic guidance and services. Financial and infrastructure support ensures the availability of funding and proper facilities like laboratories, digital libraries, and internet access to create a productive learning environment. Technology and information support includes academic information systems, e-learning platforms, and online consultation tools that facilitate efficient academic administration. Lastly, social and academic support provides services such as counseling, mentoring, scholarships, and career development programs to holistically assist students throughout their educational journey.

Zhang et al. (2024) research shows that students' perceptions of good institutional support significantly increase academic achievement and accelerate graduation. The role of institutions is now also increasingly developing through the utilization of digital technology example academic information systems, e-learning, and online guidance services that accelerate the process of completing studies. The three variables above do not stand alone, but interact with each other in influencing the timely graduation of postgraduate students. Muthukrishnan et al. (2022) found that institutional support can strengthen students' research skills, while self-management strengthens the effectiveness of utilizing available academic services. Therefore, an integrative approach that includes strengthening individual aspects and institutional systems needs to be developed as a strategic framework in supporting the improvement of timely graduation.

3. Methods

This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method intended to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant previous research results

on the influence of self-management, research skills, and institutional support on postgraduate students' timely graduation. The SLR method was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply examine trends in empirical findings, identify research gaps, and build an evidence-based conceptual framework.

The primary aim of this systematic literature review is to gain an in-depth understanding of how self-management, research skills, and institutional support contribute to the timely graduation of master's students. Specifically, the review seeks to identify and map relevant empirical and theoretical studies from 2010 to 2025 that examine the direct impact of self-management, the influence of research skills on thesis completion, and the role of institutional policies in accelerating study periods. It also analyzes trends, methodologies, and findings across studies to assess the consistency of results, track theoretical and methodological developments, and identify common mediating or moderating variables such as self-efficacy and academic motivation. Furthermore, this review aims to reveal research gaps, such as the lack of integrated models testing all three variables simultaneously, limited focus on Southeast Asian contexts, and insufficient longitudinal studies. Ultimately, it seeks to develop an evidence-based conceptual framework that can guide future empirical research and inform institutional policy and program development to better support postgraduate student success.

The literature search strategy in this study was systematically designed to obtain relevant, current, and high-quality scientific sources related to the influence of self-management, research skills, and institutional support on the timely graduation of postgraduate students. The search process involved several key stages, starting with the selection of reputable academic databases—namely Scopus, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar—to ensure diverse and comprehensive article coverage from both national and international contexts. Keywords were carefully formulated using Boolean operators (AND, OR) and translated into both English and Indonesian to optimize search results across various journals. The review was limited to publications from 2010 to 2025 to capture the most recent trends, particularly considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education. Articles were initially screened based on titles and abstracts, followed by full-text reviews, with eligible studies being documented in a reference manager (Zotero or Mendeley) and recorded in a data extraction table containing essential information such as author, year, title, research objectives, methodology, studied variables, and key findings.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are essential components of the systematic literature review (SLR) method, designed to ensure that only relevant, high-quality, and research-aligned articles are included in the analysis. The inclusion criteria require that selected articles be peer-reviewed scientific journal publications, published between 2010 and 2025, explicitly examining the variables of self-management, research skills, institutional support, and timely graduation within the context of higher education—specifically focusing on master's students—and be

available in full-text format in either English or Indonesian. Conversely, exclusion criteria eliminate articles that are opinion pieces, editorials, institutional reports, or non-empirical in nature, as well as studies focused on primary or secondary education levels, and duplicate publications or those lacking complete data. These criteria collectively ensure the integrity and relevance of the literature reviewed.

The data selection and synthesis procedure is a crucial stage in a systematic literature review (SLR) that is carried out in stages and systematically to ensure that only relevant and high-quality articles are analyzed. This process begins with an initial identification by searching the literature in scientific databases using keywords such as self-management, research skills, institutional support, and timely graduation. The next step is title and abstract screening to eliminate irrelevant or duplicate articles, followed by a full-text review to assess the suitability of content based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. From this process, 11 main articles were selected for further analysis. Data synthesis was then conducted through information extraction using a data table, thematic categorization into three main themes (self-management, research skills, institutional support), and comparative analysis to identify the relationship patterns among variables, including any mediating or moderating roles. The findings are presented in a thematic narrative that explains how each factor contributes to timely graduation, which forms the foundation for the development of a conceptual research framework.

4. Results

The following are the detailed research results using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method which are arranged in a table based on 15 articles that meet the inclusion criteria. This study discusses the relationship between self-management, research skills, and institutional support for timely graduation of postgraduate students. Each theme will be discussed in depth by referring to relevant literature.

The three articles consistently show that self-management skills have a significant impact on academic achievement, which indirectly supports timely graduation. The study by Chongchong Yang and Singh (2024) emphasizes that students with good time management and goal-setting skills tend to achieve higher GPAs. The research by Sajeevanie and Tharuka (2022) found that strategic self-management practices strongly influence academic success, with self-leadership and time management acting as moderators that strengthen this relationship. Meanwhile, Zhao et al. (2024) demonstrate that self-management affects academic achievement both directly and indirectly through the mediation of self-efficacy, and that gender does not moderate this relationship. In conclusion, strengthening self-management skills is an essential factor in supporting academic performance and encouraging students to graduate on time, especially in the context of higher education.

The three studies demonstrate that research skills significantly influence academic performance and support timely graduation. Wan Mokhtar et al. (2023)

found that information literacy, which includes searching, retrieving, and evaluating skills, has a strong positive effect on students' academic performance. Students with higher levels of information literacy tend to complete academic tasks more effectively, supporting their academic success and timely graduation. Similarly, Meerah et al. (2012) revealed that while Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia students possess moderate research skills, there is a strong need for improvement in areas such as statistical analysis and research methodology. Strengthening these skills through training and workshops is essential to ensure students' research competency and timely completion of their studies. Sudarmo et al. (2021) further emphasized that research skills play a critical role in the quality of postgraduate students' academic writing in Indonesia. Well-developed research skills contribute to better performance in assignments and research projects, which are crucial for timely graduation.

The three studies collectively demonstrate that institutional support plays a vital role in enabling students to achieve timely graduation, particularly through the provision of academic resources, effective advising, financial aid, and social integration support. Zhang et al. (2024) highlight that among various types of perceived social support, institutional resource support has the strongest positive impact on the academic achievement of master's students in China. Their study confirms that adequate institutional support—such as access to academic facilities and campus services—can enhance academic emotions and improve students' overall academic performance, contributing to timely graduation. Kim (2023) identifies institutional barriers—such as limited course availability, complicated bureaucracy, and poor academic advising—as significant obstacles to on-time graduation in U.S. higher education. Conversely, institutional support measures, including early academic planning, customized advising, sufficient financial aid, and inclusive campus programs, were shown to facilitate academic completion and retention, especially for marginalized student groups.

Two studies by Muthukrishnan et al. (2022) and Sidhu et al. (2023) highlight that self-management skills, research skills, and institutional support are key factors influencing timely graduation among postgraduate students. Research and critical reading skills are identified as primary determinants of academic success, while institutional support and personal motivation significantly enhance students' drive and engagement to complete their studies on time. Although supervisory practices do not always have a direct impact, an effective mentoring system remains essential in fostering a quality learning environment. These findings emphasize the importance of synergy between students' internal capabilities and external institutional support in ensuring on-time graduation.

5. Discussion

Research results from various sources show that on-time graduation of postgraduate students is influenced by three main factors, namely self-management,

research skills, and institutional support. First, self-management is an internal pillar that is the foundation of student learning behavior. The ability to manage time, set academic priorities, set short-term and long-term goals, and conduct regular self-evaluations are the main indicators of effective self-management. Students who have a high level of self-management tend to be able to make realistic study plans and are disciplined in achieving them. This has a direct impact on the punctuality in completing lectures and final assignments. Research by Yang and Singh (2024) shows that good self-management, such as time management and goal setting, has a positive impact on students' academic achievement. This is also in line with research by Sajeevanie and Tharuka (2022) that strategic self-management practices have a major impact on academic success, especially when supported by effective self-leadership and time management. On the other hand, Zhao et al. (2023) their findings show that self-management not only has a direct effect on academic achievement but also indirectly through increasing students' self-confidence in their abilities (self-efficacy).

Second, research skills act as a bridge between self-management and academic achievement. These skills include technical aspects, such as designing methodologies, analyzing data, and compiling and presenting research results in a valid academic form. But more than that, research skills also include analytical thinking skills, information literacy, and an understanding of academic ethics. Students who have good research skills will be better prepared to face academic challenges such as thesis writing, scientific publications, and results seminars. Research by Priyadarshini et al. (2022) showed that research skills are the strongest factor influencing students' motivation to timely graduation. This is reinforced by the study of Mokhtar et al. (2023), which found that information literacy, as part of research skills, contributes significantly to students' academic performance. Meerah et al. (2011) also found that students have moderate research skills, but additional training in research methodology and statistical analysis is still needed to improve their academic readiness. A study by Sudarmo et al. (2021) revealed that research skills directly affect the quality of postgraduate students' academic writing, which is an important indicator of study success.

Third, institutional support acts as an external reinforcement that facilitates students' academic journey. Institutional support can be in the form of providing academic facilities (libraries, laboratories, data analysis software), clear academic policies, access to supervisors, and efficient administrative services. Priyadarshini et al. (2022) found that institutional support has a significant influence on students' motivation to complete their studies on time. Zhang et al. (2023) strengthened this finding by showing that institutional resource support is the most influential factor on academic achievement, followed by support from supervisors and family. Kim (2023) identified several institutional barriers that hinder timely graduation, such as limited class schedules and complicated bureaucracy, and emphasized the importance of early academic planning and proactive mentoring services. Greene (2014) also highlighted the important role of institutional support services such as

financial support and good relationships with academic departments in enhancing graduate students' sustainability.

Two studies conducted by Muthukrishnan et al. (2022) and Sidhu et al. (2023) showed that self-management, research ability, and institutional support are key factors influencing postgraduate students' graduation on time. Self-management, such as time management and personal responsibility, has been shown to contribute significantly to the motivation to complete studies on time. Research ability is also a dominant factor, both as a direct predictor and as a mediator that strengthens the influence of other variables on graduation on time. In addition, institutional support in the form of academic facilities, campus services, and supportive policies has been shown to increase the effectiveness of student studies.

These three aspects are mutually reinforcing and need to be managed holistically. Students with good self-management and strong research skills will be more likely to achieve academic success if supported by responsive and adaptive institutions. Conversely, deficiencies in one aspect can disrupt the entire study process. For example, students with high potential and discipline will still experience obstacles if academic guidance is lacking or access to resources is limited. Thus, to achieve the goal of graduating on time, a comprehensive approach needs to be taken, namely: strengthening students' personal capacity through self-management and research skills training, as well as improving the quality of academic and institutional services by higher education institutions. Active collaboration between students and institutions is the key to the success of effective and efficient postgraduate education.

Based on the findings of the discussion, several suggestions can be proposed to improve students' on-time graduation. First, universities should develop programs that enhance students' self-management skills, such as training in time and stress management. Second, it is essential to provide structured and in-depth research skills training to better prepare students for academic challenges. Third, institutional support must be strengthened by offering financial aid, effective academic advising, and access to adequate research facilities. Lastly, a holistic approach that integrates self-management, research skills, and institutional support should be implemented to help students fully maximize their potential and achieve timely graduation.

6. Conclusion

The results of the synthesis of various studies show that the timely graduation of postgraduate students is significantly influenced by three main factors, namely self-management, research skills, and institutional support. Self-management which includes the ability to manage time, manage stress, and have motivation and discipline to study is an important foundation for successful studies. Students with good self-management tend to be more organized in completing academic tasks and are better prepared to face challenges during their studies. Research skills play an important role in supporting the completion of final assignments, such as theses or

dissertations. These skills include the ability to search for and evaluate information, analyze data, write academic papers, and understand research methodology. Students with good research skills tend to be faster and more effective in compiling scientific papers as a graduation requirement. Institutional support both in the form of academic guidance, efficient administrative services, availability of facilities, and financial and emotional assistance is an external factor that strengthens students' motivation and continuity of study. Support from supervisors and a supportive campus environment also play a role in maintaining students' enthusiasm and continuity of study until they timely graduation. Thus, efforts to improve the timely graduation of postgraduate students need to be carried out comprehensively, including empowering students' self-capacity and optimizing integrated institutional support.

References

- Alwaini, K., & Tarmidi, D. (2024). The Impact of Intellectual Capital, Business Risk, and Institutional Ownership on Firm Value. *Research Horizon*, 4(5), 31-44.
- Andriani, I., Alamsyah, G., Apriani, E., Warlizasusi, J., & Karolina, A. (2024). Model dukungan institusional dalam dinamika motivasi intrinsik, bimbingan dosen, dan kualitas publikasi penelitian. *Leadership: Jurnal Mahasiswa Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 5(2), 123-146.
- Ardini, D. (2017). Hubungan Manajemen Diri dan Orientasi Masa Depan dengan Prokrastinasi Akademik pada Mahasiswa Aktif Kuliah dan Organisasi. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 5(4), 874-888.
- Chongchong, Y., & Singh, S. S. B. (2024). The influence of student self-management on academic achievement among students in China. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(10), 2784-2794.
- Kim, J. (2023). Unveiling Barriers to Timely Graduation and Strategies for Enhancing College Student Academic Completion. In *Research Highlights in Language, Literature and Education*.
- Meerah, T. S. M., Osman, K., Zakaria, E., Ikhsan, Z. H., Krish, P., Lian, D. K. C., & Mahmud, D. (2012). Measuring graduate students research skills. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 60, 626-629.
- Muthukrishnan, P., Sidhu, G. K., Teoh, S. H., Narayanan, G., & Chan, Y. F. (2022). Key factors influencing graduation on time among postgraduate students: A PLS-SEM approach. *Asian Journal of University Education (AJUE)*, 18(1), 51-64.
- Sajeevanie, T. L., & Tharuka, W. M. V. (2022). Impact of strategic self-management practices on academic success with the moderating effects of self-leadership and time management practices: A study based on management undergraduates of the selected state universities in Sri Lanka. *Wayamba Journal of Management*, 13(2).

- Sidhu, G. K., Kannan, S., Shamida, A., & Du, R. (2023). Sustaining Students' Quality Learning Environment by Reviewing Factors to Graduate-on-Time: A case study. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 8(24), 127-133.
- Sudarmo, S., Muharlisiani, L. T., Manullang, S. O., Satria, E., & Sari, Y. A. (2021). How Research Skills Affect Indonesian Postgraduate Students Writing Outcomes: Publication Review. *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6(1), 224-234.
- Tinto, V. (2012). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago press.
- Trisandi Rizki, L., & Priyadi, I. (2025). Strategic Collaboration and Sustainable Competitive Advantage Capabilities: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Approach. *Economic and Business Horizon*, 4(1), 20-23.
- Wan Mokhtar, W. N. H., Rambli, Y. R., Jemat, J. A., & Hussin, N. (2023). The influence of information literacy towards students' academic performance. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management (JIKM)*, 13(2), 17-25.
- Willison, J., O'Regan, K., & Murdoch, P. (2006). *Research skills development framework*. The University of Adelaide.
- Zhang, B., Yin, X., & Ren, Z. (2024). Can perceived social support influence academic achievement of master's students? Evidence from a University in China. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29(16), 21449-21475.
- Zhao, Z., Ren, P., & Yang, Q. (2024). Student self-management, academic achievement: Exploring the mediating role of self-efficacy and the moderating influence of gender insights from a survey conducted in 3 universities in America. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2404.11029*.