OBTAINING A PH.D. DEGREE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
Dr. Muhammad Riaz

Assistant Professor, University of Baltistan Skardu

muhammad.riaz@uobs.edu.pk

https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6566-3049

ABSTRACT

As a Ph.D. scholar, I will share certain experiences with readers in this research article. This initiative aims not only to maintain my mental resilience but also to establish guiding principles for those entering the field of research. I have outlined several aspects related to the higher educational qualification of a Ph.D. in this article and asserted that this writing will be beneficial for researchers. My claim is rational, considering that Ph.D. education currently holds a prominent position worldwide, especially in Pakistan. Obtaining this degree not only creates job opportunities but also confers a distinct prestige upon the degree holder in society. Many students, who dream of achieving this qualification early in their academic journey, face numerous difficulties due to the lack of comprehensive information. When students, unaware of the true essence of a Ph.D. and without adequate guidance, enter the realm of research, they often find themselves in a dilemma about whether to continue their education. They struggle with challenges and uncertainties, sometimes unable to comprehend which research path to pursue. As a result, many students lose hope midway and fail to complete their education. This article is specifically designed with the Pakistani education system and institutions in mind, and it highlights a few of them. My objective is to present certain interpretations and essential requirements of the well-known qualification of a Ph.D. to novice researchers, and to effectively communicate that achieving a Ph.D. degree is not an impossible task.

Keywords: *Ph.D., Higher Education, Research, Mental Resilience, Guiding Principles, Prestige*

INTRODUCTION

This research article has been structured to highlight the significance of higher education. Our aim is to articulate the intricacies of higher education prevalent in Pakistani educational institutions in such a manner that it serves as a guiding principle for newcomers. As the author is a Ph.D. scholar who has navigated numerous challenges in fulfilling the essential requirements for a PhD, it has been observed that individuals with a keen interest in research, particularly in higher education (M.Phil. and Ph.D.), should be made aware of the system in place within Pakistani universities. Through this article, we have pointed towards certain key issues and attempted to provide solutions for some of these matters.

2. Literature Review:

No research article has been composed on this type of subject at the national level in Pakistan. This is the author's first research article of its kind, specifically structured with a focus on the Pakistani education system, particularly universities. This research article addresses the challenges faced during the M.Phil. and Ph.D. phases, thus categorizing this study as a form of observational research.

3. Research Methodology:

This research article is based on analytical and observational research methods. The author has organized this paper by drawing on personal observations, recognizing that the capacity for observation is innate to every individual. Following observation, a logical framework for analysis and interpretation is established, indicating that analysis is an inevitable outcome of observation. By integrating both elements, the author has formulated conclusions that will serve as guiding principles for novice researchers.

4. Why Should I Pursue a Ph.D.?

As is commonly said, time, circumstances, and experiences teach individuals a great deal, especially when one actively seeks knowledge. Therefore, communication and mutual discussions serve as powerful catalysts for enhancing human intellectual capacity. In this context, we will identify some essential aspects necessary for obtaining a PhD, which will consist of several stages. The first stage revolves around the question, "Why should I pursue a PhD?" Before entering the field of research, a scholar must contemplate this question: why pursue a PhD, or what is the necessity? Fundamentally, the answer to this question comprises four parts:

First: I want to become an intellectual.

Second: I need to fulfill my economic requirements.

Third: Everyone is pursuing a Ph.D., and I am trying to follow suit.

Fourth: I have a passion for it. I want the title "Doctor" to be associated with my name.

The reasons for pursuing a Ph.D. are not limited to the aforementioned points. Now, let us briefly elaborate on these aspects.

In the first part, it is stated that I want to become an intellectual. A novice should ideally possess the initial desire to be knowledgeable or educated. If this desire is present in the novice's mind, then rest assured that intellectualism is not far off; not only intellectualism but also degrees, employment, and other benefits can be within the novice's reach. The novice's passion must be vibrant, and their reading extensive. Without passion and study, the dream of obtaining a Ph.D. is akin to envisioning oneself seated on the throne of a vast empire while sleeping at night. Commands upon commands, appointments upon appointments, protocols upon protocols, and complete preparation to become the head of state. However, as soon as one awakens, they find their spouse standing before them with a utensil in hand, saying, "Sir! Wake up from your sleep and lend a hand in household chores." Therefore, one should not rely solely on dreams for obtaining a Ph.D.; rather, one must actively work towards realizing this dream.

The second point highlights that economic necessity also drives individuals towards pursuing a Ph.D. For example, a working individual may pursue a Ph.D. with the intention of advancing their career, earning some extra money, or achieving a high salary. While this intention is not inherently negative—everyone desires to meet their economic needs comfortably and remain independent—particularly individuals from lower and middle-income backgrounds often pursue PhDs or other high-level qualifications with this mindset. The reason is that intellectualism and the pursuit of knowledge cannot flourish on an empty stomach. However, it is noteworthy that early students in the Islamic educational system pursued their studies despite poverty, being aware of the essence of education and undertaking the process of acquiring knowledge with the intention of earning divine reward (Mabood, 2001). In contemporary times, financial stability indeed enhances mental capabilities, leading to new directions in research. However, it is essential to address the misconception that only the wealthy can achieve everything while the poor cannot. Historical records reveal that some individuals from impoverished backgrounds have managed to seize the currents of time, enduring every setback from society to achieve remarkable success. In this context, Dale Carnegie's book can be cited as a biographical roundup. Although this book is originally written in English, it has been translated into Urdu under the auspices of Fiction House Lahore. The author of this paper read the Urdu version of the book and closely reflected on the early lives and struggles of the 39 great men. During this process, the author came to understand that extreme dedication and self-honesty are essential prerequisites for achieving success. An individual who is not accustomed to hard work and

does not recognize their personal strengths can never reach the pinnacle of success.

However, such instances are rare. If every poor person were able to seize the opportunities of their time, there would be no poverty or ignorance in the world today. Everyone would be wealthy, all would hold Ph.Ds., and everyone would be knowledgeable. If any poor individual has succeeded, it has only been through extreme hard work and perseverance.

In the third section, it is mentioned that just because everyone is pursuing a Ph.D., one should not follow suit. This is the greatest folly. If one is to imitate others in every endeavor, then many people engage in trade; you should also pursue trade. People acquire military, business, and various other skills; you should aspire to be like them. This creates a competitive atmosphere, and a negative one at that. Do not pursue a PhD merely because others are doing so; however, do learn from your seniors.

In the fourth section, it is stated that passion has no price. Indeed, people conquer mountain peaks to fulfill their passions. So what if you have pursued a PhD? As a researcher, I salute those who pursue their PhDs out of passion. However, I must point out that if you are pursuing a PhD out of passion, you should definitely avoid plagiarism. It should not be the case that you only engage with topics you find appealing while disregarding those you do not, or that you enjoy the journey where opportunities arise but do not attempt to explore where they do not. Not every topic in a PhD program will be your favorite; some topics must be accepted out of necessity.

5. Fundamentals and Milestones of PhD:

In the preceding discourse, under the heading "Why Pursue a PhD," we delved into various facets gleaned from our academic experiences. We articulated four distinct components, emphasizing the indispensable nature of a genuine passion for doctoral studies. However, we underscored that this passion should be nurtured through rigorous research and dedicated effort, as opposed to academic misconduct or plagiarism.

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the research methodology and cultivate a genuine research environment, we have structured these sessions into distinct segments. In our inaugural discussion, I introduced the theme "Why Pursue a PhD." In this installment, I will explore "Decoding the Initial Steps of a PhD Journey," encompassing the following key aspects:

• The preliminary steps towards pursuing a PhD.
• Familiarity with the M.Phil. curriculum.
• The stages of the written examination.
• Successful completion of the MPhil coursework.

Indeed, an individual who possesses a fervent passion for research and secures admission to a PhD program is fortunate. This enthusiasm serves as a catalyst for achieving two primary objectives:

• Acquiring new knowledge.
• Disseminating this knowledge to others.

Therefore, if the value of passion can be realized in the form of a Ph.D., then what more could one want? Some of my friends may become irritated, questioning why the author keeps emphasizing the Ph.D. Do other qualifications hold no significance? Is it only through a PhD that one can attain wealth, respect, fame, and employment, and so on? While my friends' objections are valid and grounded in truth, I cannot help it; my mind, my thoughts, and my focus revolve around the Ph.D. The reason is simply that when I was preparing my Ph.D. thesis, I became so engrossed in it that I was oblivious to everything else. My entire existence was centered around the Ph.D.; even in casual conversations, the Ph.D. lingered in the back of my mind, to the extent that I would dream about it even in my sleep. This "Ph.D. narrative" carries a message for those passionate about research: you must think about the Ph.D., embody it, and speak of it so that every part of you becomes energized, enabling you to complete your Ph.D. in a timely manner.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, what should your first step towards a PhD be? I will clearly state that your first step should be positive and filled with enthusiasm. By a positive step, I mean steadfastness. Just as a soldier heads into battle, it is not possible for them to turn back until the outcome of the battle is determined. This is a matter of the soldier's bravery and courage. The journey of a Ph.D. is no different. Once you have committed, looking back should be a source of embarrassment for you. Therefore, your first step towards a Ph.D. should be unwavering, stable, and

enduring. This can be your emotional state. Now, I will point towards some practical steps.

Typically, educational institutions have certain boundaries and conditions that a candidate must fulfill to gain admission. Among these requirements is a document known as the "admission form." The fields marked on the form indicate that you must accept all the conditions imposed by the relevant university. The form available for M.Phil. has two fields that require your special attention, as they will determine your future path: whether you intend to pursue only an MPhil or continue uninterrupted to a Ph.D. One field states "M.Phil.," while the other states "M.Phil. Leading to Ph.D." You should choose the latter. The advantage of this choice is that you can complete your Ph.D. in a shorter time without needing to obtain a separate M.Phil. degree. The absence of an MPhil degree is addressed by a request known as the "Application for Transfer from M.Phil. to Ph.D.". Before 2017, the admission process for obtaining higher education degrees (MPhil, PhD) under the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan was based on two parts. Initially, it was up to the researcher to decide whether to enroll only in MPhil and qualify for the degree upon completion, or to enroll in MPhil Leading to PhD and complete their degree within the stipulated five-year period. However, this procedure has now been discontinued. In 2017, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan issued an official notification stating that Pakistani universities would now require (a separate degree for MPhil and a separate degree for PhD. (HEC, 2004) The only drawback in this process of transferring from M.Phil. to Ph.D. is that you do not receive an M.Phil. degree; you only receive a Ph.D. degree. However, selecting the M.Phil./Ph.D. option in other contexts would be a correct and beneficial decision.

The only drawback in the process of transferring from M.Phil. to Ph.D. is that you do not receive an M.Phil. degree; you only receive a Ph.D. degree. However, selecting the M.Phil./PhD. option in other contexts would be a correct and beneficial decision.

The M.Phil. in Islamic Studies (This research paper is designed to guide scholars in the field of Islamic Studies, particularly those aspiring to pursue a Ph.D. Drawing on personal experiences and observations from the M.Phil. and Ph.D. programs at the University of Karachi, this article aims to provide valuable insights) comprises eight coursework modules, divided into two semesters. Students are required to achieve a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 in both semesters, which translates to a minimum of 71% in each course. If a student fails to meet this requirement, they are granted one additional attempt to improve their grades by retaking two courses. However, failure to meet the required GPA on the second attempt will result in termination from the program.

Successful completion of the one-year M.Phil. coursework signifies readiness to commence doctoral research. It's important to note that, until 2017, the University of Karachi offered a combined M.Phil./Ph.D. program. However, regulations have since changed, mandating that students must complete their MPhil before proceeding to the Ph.D. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has imposed strict guidelines on this process.

6. Extensive study is essential for a PhD:

In my previous research, I highlighted two key points:

• PhD versus extensive study

• PhD and avoidance of academic plagiarism

A candidate will not truly enjoy the process of pursuing a PhD unless they engage in extensive study. While "interest" and "following trends" can motivate one to obtain a PhD degree, they do not provide the competence and capability that a PhD scholar or intellectual should possess. The quality of study must be comprehensive. It should be so thorough that if you are not a native speaker of the language in which you are writing your thesis, your first step should be to familiarize yourself with the literature of that language. For instance, if a researcher is writing a thesis in Urdu, it is essential for them to gain familiarity with Urdu literature. In this regard, genres such as digests, novels, and biographies should be read extensively. I would like to mention a specific digest that can be quite beneficial for those seeking research: the story "Deota" written by the famous novelist Mohiuddin Nawab. (Nawab, M., (1977) This multi-volume

work, serialized in a suspense digest and later compiled into book form by Kitabiyat Publications, Karachi, offers a rich tapestry of narrative techniques and stylistic choices. Engaging with such works can significantly enhance a researcher's ability to produce original and insightful scholarship. It possesses a high level of creative ability. The special feature of this digest is that it offers a vast world of words. From domestic matters to global issues, the manipulation of language is so impressive that it compels one to applaud. Although the digest contains supernatural elements that are improbable in real life, the entertainment and selection of words demonstrate the author's remarkable talent. Some researchers may object, arguing that the thesis writer also indulges in fanciful ideas. They claim to provide guidance in Islamic Studies while recommending novels and digests for study. Where do novels and digests fit into Islamic Studies? I must apologize, but I do not consider this objection worthy of attention. As someone who holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies, I can attest that my writing ability, if it has any strength, is due to my study of these novels and digests. I have read 50 parts of the "Deota" digest. Instead of enjoying the supernatural events mentioned in the digest, I focused more on the literary genre. I observed that Mohiuddin Nawab constructed a complete structure of words even for a brief incident. The author's unique ability lies in the use of both colloquial and literary language throughout. At times, he appears to engage in very casual conversation, while at other moments, he exhibits a philosophical style of discourse. As a Ph.D. researcher, I have come to understand that research and all related matters are like a long puzzle, much like a novel or digest. To solve this puzzle, you will need to study various types of books. When writing a thesis, you will have to use even the simplest language, as well as engage with specialized writing. Therefore, studying novels and digests will not hinder you. You are not young, naive, or weak. You are mature, aware, and cultured; thus, I assert that you will not be negatively affected and will be able to complete your Ph.D. thesis as a good writer.

These recommendations are particularly for researchers who speak Shina (Dr. Namus, 1961), Shina is the predominant language spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan, especially in the districts of Gilgit, Diamer, and Astore. It is also commonly used in parts of Nagar, Hunza, Ghizr, and Skardu districts. Balti (Nadir, 2020), Balti is the second most widely spoken language in Gilgit-Baltistan. It is primarily spoken in the districts of Skardu, Ganche, Khaplu, and Shigar. Rich in its alphabet and literary genres, Balti has a long history and deep connections with other regions. Balti literature is renowned for its elegance and folk tales.

Balochi, Pashto, or Sindhi. I strongly encourage them to read novels and digests. I have read the renowned Orientalist Karen Armstrong's book "A History of God." In this work, the author's scholarly and research efforts are clearly evident. In "A History of God," she insists on creating a concept of God that is sometimes sculpted by human hands and at other times appears to evolve gradually (in terms of creation). This God, as portrayed by Karen Armstrong, seems so utterly constrained that at times, He becomes irrelevant to human affairs. (Karen Armstrong, 2005) While it may not be possible for a researcher, particularly one associated with Islamic studies, to agree with the author's theories, reading this book with a scholarly intent can be beneficial for a researcher. I recommend reading this book because, despite its numerous shortcomings, it is intriguing and establishes a narrative that presents the concept of "the beginning of God." However, it is important to note that an Islamic researcher understands that the God of Islam has no beginning and no end, and no time precedes Him. (Sadooq, 1346 AH)

Among other authors, William L. Langer's book "Encyclopedia of World History," which consists of three volumes, is noteworthy. Although I do not have access to the English version, the Urdu translation by Ghulam Rasool Mehr is reliable in terms of its comprehensiveness and covers an extensive narrative of worldly and human history. The author characterizes ninety-nine percent of human living conditions and lifestyle as belonging to the Stone Age. (William L. Langer, 2010) The famous philosopher Immanuel Kant's book "Critique of Pure Reason" is a significant repository of philosophical discourse. In this work, the author discusses the concepts of space and time in such a way that he sometimes considers space to be outside the realm of empirical generalities,

while at other times, he demonstrates time without relying on experience. (Kant, Immanuel, 2010) For researchers interested in politics and governance, Machiavelli's book "The Prince" can be quite useful. The author outlines two aspects of governance: democracy and monarchy. He asserts that kings with good governance have always possessed extraordinary abilities. They did not ascend to power through support or hereditary practices but ruled based on their own competence.(Machiavelli, 1999) Similarly, Michael Hart's book "The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History" can provide readers with a vivid depiction of the daily lives of great personalities. On the very first page of this book, the author describes Prophet Muhammad as the most influential figure in the world, stating that he is "The only historical figure who has been successful on both religious and secular fronts." (Michael Hart, 2009) I have learned two important things from these authors:

First, that personal creations should be more prominent than references in writing. **Second,** that one should utilize primary sources as much as possible.

However, one thing I intentionally did not learn from the aforementioned Western researchers and authors is that they manipulate the primary material to such an extent that the original purpose is lost, and the meaning of the relevant content becomes completely altered. As we have referenced above, Michael Hart's book serves as an example. Although he has placed the Prophet Muhammad at the top of his list of 100 influential individuals, he repeatedly introduces the Prophet as a 'politician,' 'ruler,' 'sovereign,' 'political leader,' and 'successful worldly person,' rather than acknowledging him as Allah's chosen and selected servant. Intentionally, Hart has avoided using terms like 'prophet', 'messenger', or 'apostle' for the Prophet Muhammad. Hart claims that the Prophet Muhammad became acquainted with the concept of God's oneness through Jews and Christians. He also claims that a feeling arose in the heart of Muhammad, namely that he was selected to propagate the true faith. This is not their commendable approach. It is possible that these Orientalists did not even attempt to understand the

original purpose. It seems they study the relevant material solely for their own objectives and benefits. Particularly when they sit down to write about the Prophet Muhammad, their writing appears completely biased. What is surprising is that at the beginning of the book, they claim that all the material for this book has been sourced from Arabic texts. (John Kelsay, 2013) Among Islamic scholars, the works of certain individuals can prove to be vibrant for study. Notably, nearly all of Iranian scholar Morteza Motahhari's books, Dr. Ali Shariati's "Gharib Rabzah," "Ali: A Mythical Truth," "Fatima is Fatima," "Red Shi'ism," "Succession and Consultation" are highly useful. Additionally, Mojtaba Lari's "A Glimpse of Western Civilization" is an important book, although it is primarily compiled from secondary sources. The author has utilized translated works throughout and has attempted to understand Western society through books translated into Persian. This approach is not considered credible in the realm of research. Such a research and writing attitude is regarded as entirely biased. However, when considering the writing style and the genre of research, it serves as a useful book for novice researchers. Sayyid Muhammad Qutb's "In the Shade of the Qur'an" is a useful and practical book. This commentary encompasses a general discussion on the establishment of an Islamic society from a cosmic perspective, grounded in the Qur'anic viewpoint. The author identifies the hidden secret of turning to God as the fundamental condition for harmony between the laws of nature and the natural affairs of human life. (Sayyid Qutb, 1995) Ameen Misri's books "Duha al-Islam" and "Fajr al-Islam" are indeed useful in terms of writing style; however, both of these works by the author (Ameen Misri) are quite controversial. He has used harsh language regarding certain Muslim sects without delving into the depth of research. (Ahmad Amin, 1969)

The books of Maulana Syed Abul A'la Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, are particularly valuable and informative for studying concepts such as the Islamic state, caliphate and kingship, Veil, and Tafheemaat, as well as Tafheem-ul-Quran. For students who have a passion for Islamic sciences and aspire to enter the realm of research, these books not only provide a wealth of material

but also offer guiding principles of writing style. Notably, the latter book (Tafheem-ul-Quran) is specifically designed for individuals with an average level of education who may not have proficiency in the Arabic language but wish to benefit from the extensive knowledge of the Quranic sciences. (Maududi, Syed Abul Ala, 1949) In addition, several books on the life of the Prophet (Seerat) are noteworthy, including "Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum" by Mubarakpuri, "Uswat Al-Rasul" by Syed Awlad Haider Faq Belgrami, "Salam Bar Mustafa" by Talib Hussain Kripali, "Al-Sahih Min Seerat Al-Nabi Al-Azam" by Allama Jaafar Murtaza Amili, "Seerat Al-Nabi" by Allama Shibli Nomani, "Rahmatul-lil-Alameen" by Qazi Suleiman Puri (Comprising three Volumes), "Al-Nabi Al-Khatim" by Manazir Ahsan Gilani, "Arab Ka Chand" by Swami Lakshmi Prasad, and "Hadi Al-Alam," the first unpainted book on the life of the Prophet by Muhammad Wali Razi. These works are not only informative and beneficial for study but also exhibit a robust writing style. It is important to note that we have not mentioned the earliest books on Seerat here. These Seerat texts present a chronological sequence of events and circumstances. While researchers may find these books useful for reference, they may not necessarily provide a consistent methodology in writing style.

7. A few research books written in Urdu:

In our previous discussion, we highlighted two essential foundational aspects necessary for research and scrutiny:
(1) PhD versus extensive reading
(2) PhD avoidance of academic plagiarism

We also referenced several techniques for study and mentioned certain books that are crucial for a researcher to enhance their writing skills. Here, I would like to list a few more titles that are entirely related to research and its methodologies. The books are as follows:

7.1. Tehqiq Ka Fan (The Art of Research):

This book is authored by Dr. Geyan Chand. Written in Urdu, it provides a comprehensive overview of all aspects of research. The author has discussed various facets of research, making it beneficial for both teachers and students.

Specifically, this book has been crafted with the research needs of M.Phil. and Ph.D. students in Urdu studies in mind. Some experts regard this book as a foundational reference in the field of research. However, based on my study, I would summarize the key points as follows: Tehqiq Ka Fan (The Art of Research) not only offers a detailed exploration of research and its related matters but also provides comprehensive guidance on structuring research papers and adopting the correct writing style. The author claims that a significant majority of research supervisors in Urdu departments across India are not qualified to guide research, as they themselves lack the capability for substantial research, a situation that is similarly reflected in Pakistan. (Dr. Gian Chand, 2012)

7.2. Tehqiq wa Tadveen ka Tariqa-e-Kaar (Methodology of Research and Editing):

This book is authored by Professor Dr. Khalq Dad Malik. It is equally beneficial for teachers and students interested in discourse and research within the fields of human and social sciences. Specifically, students engaged in research in Arabic, Islamic studies, and social sciences can derive significant benefit from it. The author presents all methodologies and principles of research and editorial writing in a comprehensive and practical manner. Professor Dr. Khalq Dad outlines eight types of research categorized from various perspectives:
1. According to sources
2. According to aims
3. According to duration
4. According to impact
5. According to the number of researchers
6. According to quality
7. According to subject matter
8. According to methodology. (Malik, 2016)

7.3. Fundamental Factors and Components of Research (In Light of the Quran):

The author of this book is Colonel (R) Dr. Umar Farooq Dogar. This book encompasses the concept of research in relation to the Quran, the aims and objectives of research, the requirements of research, the fundamental factors and components of research, and various research methodologies.

As the first book on this subject, it serves as a primary source for the components of the art of research, its methods and methodologies, prerequisites, and detailed aspects. Scholars and experts can build their research frameworks upon this work, utilizing it as a foundational reference for their significant writings and research papers.(Dogar, 1999)

7.4. Principles and Foundations of Research in Islam:

This book has been specifically written with the needs of M.Phil. students in Islamic Studies in mind. The author of the book is Dr. Tufail Hashmi. It emphasizes that students pursuing a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies must directly engage with the primary sources of Islam. In discussing the fundamental sources of Islam, the Quran, known as the Furqan-e-Hameed, is identified as the primary source, while the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad and his Hadiths are recognized as the second major source. (Hashmi, Dr. Tafeel, n.d)
Research Methodology:
The author of this book is S.M. Shahid. The esteemed author discusses four major topics:
1. Philosophical
2. Scientific
3. Historical
4. Statistical
This book encourages research based on scientific principles and considers results that emerge from the analysis of collected data to be acceptable. (S.M. Shahid, n.d)

7.5. Principles of Research:

This book is authored by Abdul Hamid Khan Abbasi. It is a valuable and comprehensive resource in Urdu on the principles of research. The book serves as a significant aid for students engaged in the field of research. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has classified this book as equivalent to two research articles in category X. Furthermore, it is among the ten books by the author that were recognized as the best books at the national level in 2008. The author claims that the principles of research are rooted in Islamic teachings, and he has compiled a repository of knowledge in the form of Hadiths, drawing from both tradition and interpretation. (Abbasi, 2015)

7.6. Islamic Principles of Research:

This book, authored by Professor Dr. Muhammad Baqar Khan Khakwani, provides a historical overview of Islamic principles of research. The author analyzes and evaluates the efforts of Muslims in the fields of philosophical and scientific research. Additionally, he articulates the distinctive contributions of Muslims in the academic and research domains with great emphasis. (Khakawani, 2015) As I mentioned at the outset, the purpose of this research paper is to guide M.Phil and Ph.D. students. If this work can provide even a slight guidance to any researcher, it would be an honor for me. Therefore, this material should be read comprehensively with a research-oriented mindset.

8. Fundamental Requirements of a Ph.D. Thesis:

This is the fifth session of Ph.D. guidance. In this session, I will discuss the selection of a Ph.D. topic and the preparation of the synopsis. Before delving into the topic selection and synopsis preparation, it seems appropriate to define the terms involved. The literal meaning of "Synopsis" is "To look together." The prefix "Syn" means together, and "Opsis" means to see or to glance. (Dr. Geyan Chand, op. cit) In terminology, a synopsis refers to presenting a research proposal with comprehensive critique and organization. It is the process of presenting ideas and thoughts under a structured format without any pressure, thereby defining the topic as a synopsis. (Durrani, 2016)
Compiling many elements together in a short time, such as the division of chapters, followed by sections, and subsequently subheadings of those sections, is considered the most crucial aspect of a synopsis. In fact, a synopsis is crafted in three stages: the beginning, the middle, and the end. To organize a synopsis effectively, it is essential to have a broad study. The synopsis is prepared after selecting the topic. For preparing the synopsis, it is necessary to study various books, which may include texts on Hadith, history, logic, philosophy, jurisprudence, and other subjects. It is important to keep in mind that the provision of material should not be limited to books alone; information can also be acquired from other sources. For instance, the internet, media outlets, oral material from

reputable individuals, and visiting various cities or regions to achieve the research objectives can all contribute to the data collection process. Responses to questions posed during the research also play a significant role in topic preparation. After arranging the "preliminary outline" of the synopsis, the thesis begins, which undergoes several stages, and these stages must be navigated by every researcher. The completion of the thesis necessitates the following elements:

(1) Questionnaire
(2) Face-to-face meetings (Interviews)
(3) Summarization
(4) Book review
(5) Visits to Islamic journals and periodicals
(6) Mind clearance

8.1. Questionnaire:

To prepare a questionnaire, it is essential to establish contact with various individuals and institutions to ensure that there are no difficulties in obtaining the necessary information. The researcher can gather relevant information related to their topic by posing questions to heads of different individuals or organizations, and these questions should pertain specifically to the subject matter. Questions that deviate from the topic will not provide any significant benefit to the researcher. The questions should comprehensively cover all necessary aspects. The preparation of the questionnaire cannot be done in a group setting; it is solely developed on an individual basis.

8.2. Face-to-Face Interviews:

In the preparation of a research paper, there are instances where a lack of material becomes evident. Despite studying various types of literature, researchers may find themselves unable to achieve their objectives, necessitating the use of alternative sources. Face-to-face interviews are one such method. During these interviews, researchers gather opinions from various experts within the context of contemporary issues. These opinions are subsequently incorporated into a questionnaire related to the research topic, which is later presented in a structured format. For interviews, it is preferable to conduct them in person. However, if face-to-face meetings are not feasible, interviews can also be conducted via telephone, fax, text

messages, and platforms such as WhatsApp or email.

8.3. Summarization (Text Summary):

Summarization is a challenging task, as it requires an individual to condense extensive discussions spread over several pages into a concise format. However, it is essential for the researcher to present the opinions of various scholars and experts before articulating their own stance, as this strengthens their argument. It is not necessary for the topic under discussion to provide extensive evidence from a scholar's or researcher's book, such as five or ten pages. Instead, the primary objective of the researcher should be to present a summary of the relevant discussion in just two or three lines.

8.4. Book Review:

When selecting any book—whether it pertains to logic, hadith, jurisprudence, history, or other subjects that the researcher can benefit from—it is crucial to consider whether the book can contribute to the completion of the relevant topic. To strengthen the references, the researcher must include the title of the book, the author's name, and the name of the publishing institution, as these elements serve to reinforce the credibility of their argument.

8.5. Visiting Islamic Journals and Periodicals:

It is essential for researchers to visit various libraries where they can expect to find relevant materials. Specifically, visiting the journal and periodical section of the university from which the researcher is pursuing their PhD can be significantly beneficial in obtaining pertinent resources. The purpose of visiting libraries is to prepare an index. Indexing is typically done collectively rather than individually; that is, a group consisting of four or five students will oversee different sections. The journals housed in these libraries should be available in multiple languages. A researcher engaged in the study of an Islamic topic should not limit themselves to their native language or the language in which they are writing their paper. Instead, they should be familiar with various languages, particularly English, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. This is crucial because obtaining relevant materials is not feasible through

a single language alone; familiarity with other languages also plays a vital role in resource acquisition.

8.6. Mind Clearance:

It is essential for the researcher to have a clear mind regarding the type of topic they are interested in selecting, who their supervisor will be, and which field and area of research they will focus on. Additionally, the ability to differentiate between essential and non-essential materials should be a fundamental characteristic of the researcher.

9. General Types of Research:

It is well-known that the quality of research is essentially determined by the breadth of study. The broader the study, the more refined the research will be. In the field of sociology, the questionnaire method may be one of the best approaches; however, for those pursuing a PhD in Islamic studies, the questionnaire cannot be the sole or definitive method of research. For instance, if a researcher intends to write a thesis on the early Islamic state, will they rely solely on a questionnaire? It is evident that to understand the fundamentals of the Islamic state, the relevant research scholar must refer to primary sources. Without consulting these foundational texts, their research would be deemed incomplete. However, as mentioned earlier, for those working in sociology, the questionnaire can indeed be an effective method. This was a side note. Now, I will discuss the types of research. Experts in the field of research methodology have identified three categories of research based on their approach:

(1) Historical Research:

Historical research involves the collection, selection, evaluation, verification, and classification of facts related to past times, previous conditions, and lost events concerning education. (Sultana Bakhsh, 2012) The primary aim is the critical inquiry and pursuit of truth. Another significant objective of obtaining accurate information about past conditions and events is to make informed predictions about current and future educational circumstances and occurrences.

(2) Experimental Research:

In the context of research, observations are either derived from historical records or obtained through narrative research methods. The primary objective is to ensure that the facts selected for analysis are reliable. After manipulating these facts both practically and optionally, it can be verified what their compositional elements are and how they manifest.

(3) Narrative Research:

Narrative research refers to the process of clearly depicting current circumstances and events as they occur in their original context. (S.M. Shahid, op. cit.) This type of research is particularly useful and effective for identifying issues. If problems are adequately clarified, they can provide a reliable foundation for more in-depth experimental research. When we aim to investigate issues related to the current nature of various aspects of education, the behaviors and attitudes of individuals in contemporary situations, or the elucidation of various educational matters and events, or when we seek to identify the nature of interrelationships among different educational factors, we categorize such research as narrative or descriptive research. The following steps are involved in narrative research:

1. Conduct a critical review of the research topic or current situation.
2. Define the problem in such a way that it confirms the fundamental assumptions.
3. Prepare a list of key aspects related to the problem.
4. Select the sources through which the required information will be obtained.
5. Choose a methodology for acquiring the data.
6. Subsequently, classify the relevant data and present it in a more structured manner.
7. Select the subject for observation as extensively as possible.
8. Analyze and explain the events that emerge as results, along with their interpretation.

10. Intellectual Plagiarism:

In the field of research, "Intellectual Plagiarism" is a well-known term. In simple terms, it refers to the act of publishing others' ideas (both strengths and weaknesses) and claiming the rights to someone

else's work (writing and authorship) as one's own, which constitutes academic theft.(Durrani, op. cit.) This process can also be described as intellectual dishonesty. Although the term "plagiarism" is primarily applied to research-related matters, I believe that any writing or speech derived from another person's expressions, whether in written or spoken form, constitutes theft and intellectual dishonesty. For instance, stealing someone's poem, prose, speech, or even a well-known phrase with the intent of claiming it as one's own is considered intellectual plagiarism.

11. Conclusion:

This research paper is based on personal opinions and observations. We have addressed the challenges encountered during the pursuit of a higher academic degree to the best of our ability. The primary purpose of organizing this research article is to share the various issues I faced during my M.Phil. or Ph.D. journey. Specifically, the completion of workload, the selection of a research topic, and the unfamiliarity with the process of writing a thesis were significant challenges. There were numerous instances where, after selecting a topic, I felt satisfied that it met the research requirements and aligned with contemporary research standards. However, the same topic was often deemed inadequate by experts and categorized among "rejected" titles. Throughout this period, I also underwent research training and progressed through various learning stages. While completing my Ph.D. thesis, and as all matters were deemed commendable according to the research regulations of the university, I thought it would be beneficial to present a guiding framework for aspiring researchers. This research article is an endeavor born out of that spirit. I hope this paper proves to be beneficial for those in search of research insights

REFERENCES

Muhammad Abdul-Mabood. (2001). The educational system in the prophetic era (p. 57). Lahore: Maktabah Rahmaniyah.

Nawab, M. (n.d.). Deota. Karachi: Kitabiyat Publications.

Dr. Namus. (1961). Gilgit and Shina language (p. 23). Bahawalpur: Urdu Academy.

Shah, S. N. (2020, December 20). Melodious languages echoing in the beautiful mountains: Creation of literature in the languages of Gilgit-Baltistan. Express Urdu.

Armstrong, K. (2005). A history of God (Y. Jawad, Trans., pp. 7-28). Lahore: Nigarshat.

Sadooq, A. J. M. ibn A. ibn A. (1346 AH). Al-tawhid: Bab al-tawhid wa nfi al-tashbih (p. 31). Beirut: Dar al-Ma'arifah.

Langer, W. L. (2010). Encyclopedia of world history (Vol. 1, M. G. R. Mehr, Trans., p. 16). Lahore: Waqar Publications.

Kant, I. (2010). Critique of pure reason (S. A. Hussain, Trans., pp. 78-83). Karachi: City Book Point.

Machiavelli. (1999). The prince (D. Mehmood Hussain, Trans., pp. 35-62). Lahore: Fiction House.

Hart, M. (2009). The 100: A ranking of the most influential persons in history (M. A. Batt, Trans., p. 25). Lahore: Takhliqaat.

Kelsay, J. (2013). Arguing the just war in Islam (T. Abbas, Trans., pp. 20-27). Lahore: Mashal Books.

Qutb, S. (1995). In the shade of the Quran (Vol. 1, S. M. S. Shirazi, Trans., pp. 16, 21). Lahore: Idara-e-Nashriyat-e-Islami.

Amin, A. (1969). Fajr al-Islam (pp. 256-303). Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Arabiya.

Maududi, S. A. A. (1949). Tafheem al-Quran (Vol. 1, p. 6). Lahore: Idara Tarjuman al-Quran.

Chand, G. (2012). Tehqiq ka Fan (The Art of Research) (pp. 51-52). Islamabad: National Language Authority.

Malik, K. D. (2016). The methodology of research and compilation (pp. 34-44). Lahore: Azad Book Depot.

Dogar, U. F. (1999). The fundamental factors and pillars of research (in the light of the Quran) (pp. 6-7). Lahore: Syed Moudodi International Institute.

Hashmi, T. (n.d.). Principles and foundations of research in Islam (pp. 8-14). Islamabad: Allama Iqbal Open University.

Shahid, S. M. (n.d.). Research methodology (p. 7). Lahore: Avenue Books Palace.

Abbasi, A. H. K. (2015). Usul-e-Tahqeeq (Principles of research) (pp. 28, 35). Islamabad: National Book Foundation.

Khakawani, M. B. K. (2015). Islamic principles of research (pp. 24-28). Lahore: Adabiyat. Chand, G. (n.d.). Op. cit.

Durrani, A. (2016). Linguistic and literary research and compilation (p. 230). Islamabad: National Book Foundation.

Bakhsh, S. (2012). Principles of research in Urdu (p. 11). Lahore: Urdu Academy.

Shahid, S. M. (n.d.). Op. cit. (p. 20).

Durrani, A. (n.d.). Linguistic and literary research and compilation (p. 333).

Higher Education Commission. (2020). HEC PhD policy. Retrieved August 28, 2024, from https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/servi ces/faculty/Plagiarism/Documents/HEC-PhD-Policy.pdf.