



# Doctorate Education: The Connection Between Academic Success, Doctoral Identity, and Relationships

Olawale Olamide Akindele 

Carolina University, USA

---

**Type of Work:** Peer Reviewed.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.21013/jems.v20.n3.p4>


**Review history:** Submitted: June 19, 2024; Revised: July 27, 2024; Accepted: August 15, 2024

## How to cite this paper:

**Akindele, O. O.** (2024). Doctorate Education: The Connection Between Academic Success, Doctoral Identity, and Relationships. *IRA-International Journal of Education & Multidisciplinary Studies* (ISSN 2455-2526), 20(3), 207-211. <https://dx.doi.org/10.21013/jems.v20.n3.p4>

---

© IRA Academico Research.

 This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) subject to a proper citation to the publication source of the work.

**Disclaimer:** The scholarly papers as reviewed and published by IRA Academico Research are the views and opinions of their respective authors and are not the views or opinions of IRA Academico Research. IRA Academico Research disclaims any harm or loss caused due to the published content to any party.

---

IRA Academico Research is an institutional publisher member of *Publishers International Linking Association Inc. (PILA-CrossRef)*, USA. Being an institutional signatory to the *Budapest Open Access Initiative, Hungary*, the content published by IRA Academico Research is available under Open Access. IRA Academico Research is also a registered content provider under *Open Access Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH)*.

This paper is peer-reviewed following IRA Academico Research's [Peer Review Program](#) .

---

Olawale Olamide Akindele  [0000-0001-6383-8511](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6383-8511)

## **ABSTRACT**

Doctorate education is a highly specialized and sophisticated type of higher education that intends to help develop students into autonomous researchers and scholars who can make novel contributions to their study fields. This paper explores the essential components of doctoral education journey, with concentration on how to achieve academic success, doctorate Identity, and build relationships. The paper underscores the importance of positive relationships with advisors, peers, and family in facilitating the doctoral journey, while highlighting mentorship as essential for developing a strong researcher identity. Also, the paper pinpoints the essential elements that lead to academic achievement, including aptitude for the subject matter, drive, mentoring, and a nurturing atmosphere for research. Knowing the rules of discipline, doing research, and building faculty relationships all contribute to the formation of a doctorate identity. Overall, it highlights how important it is to take a comprehensive approach to doctorate education, incorporating identity formation, academic performance, and supportive connections, in order to help students make the shift from doctoral students to independent scholars.

**Keywords:** Doctorate education, doctoral identity, academic success, mentorship, relationship

## **Introduction**

Doctorate education is a highly specialized and sophisticated type of higher education. To elaborate, doctorate education is an essential component of higher education that prepares students to become scholars and experts in their respective fields (Smith, 2022). Then again, doctorate education is intended to help students develop into autonomous researchers who can make novel contributions to their subject or study (Baker & Pifer, 2011; Gardner, 2009; Madikizela-Madiya, Goba & Nkamkbulu, 2016). However, as sighted, doctoral education is an essential component of higher education, and doctorate education is also a demanding process that calls for both mental prowess and emotional fortitude. In light of this, the degree to which doctorate students have positive relationships with their advisors, family, and peers will help their mental ability to help navigate the process and determine how smoothly they transition from being a doctorate student to an independent scholar (Baker & Pifer, 2011). More so, the doctoral process must be facilitated by supervision, emphasizing the need for a supportive and nurturing environment for doctorate students to develop their researcher identity (Madikizela-Madiya et al., 2013). Agreeably, mentorship is a crucial part of helping doctoral students succeed in their chosen program, which must help students forge the identity of researchers that transcends their academic achievements (Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011). Thus, the connections and relationships established by doctoral students are considerably impactful on their sense of professional identity, relationship, and success.

This paper aims to provide the context for doctorate education and explore how important academic identity, success, and relationship are when pursuing a doctorate study. More specifically, this paper will examine and provide incisive insights into doctoral students' experiences and guide students and faculty in navigating this challenging but ultimately rewarding process. In common, the general themes that emerged from the synthesized literature suggest that a supportive research environment, strong relationships, and mentorship connections are crucial for the

development of doctorate students. So, it is proposed that the key components of a successful doctorate education are relationships, doctoral identity, and academic success.

## **The Goal of Academic Success**

Academic success is a crucial factor in doctorate education. In context, academic success is the level of success a student has achieved in their academic pursuits (Gardner, 2009; Johnson & Smith, 2021). Evidently, for doctorate education, research has shown that academic achievement is positively correlated with doctorate education, and students who do well in their doctoral programs are more likely to succeed in academia (Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011; Johnson & Smith, 2021; Smith, 2022). However, in doctorate studies, various parameters or indicators are used to evaluate students' success in the program. For example, grade point average (GPA) is used as students are expected to maintain a good grade standing during the course work, retention of student in the program, passing of the comprehensive examination, and degree completion are all seen as academic success parameters or indicators (Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011; Smith, 2022). Furthermore, six factors were identified to have contributed to academic success, which are intellectual ability, motivation, mentorship, scholarly discipline, research skills, interpersonal skills, and research environment (Gardner, 2009). In addition, also emphasized is the importance of academic success, noting that relationships with faculty and peers, family and role models are crucial for both academic and emotional support during the doctoral journey (Baker & Pifer, 2011; Madikizela-Madiya et al., 2013). Arguably, academic success is an important and a product of a supportive supervisor, a collaborative research environment, and opportunities for presenting and publishing research which are critical goals in developing a researcher's identity.

## **The Doctoral Identity**

Doctoral identity is essential to doctoral education and a key component of academic success. In support, doctoral students' sense of identity as scholars and professionals is shaped by the need for students to understand the norms and values of their discipline and develop the ability to communicate their research works to diverse audiences (Madikizela-Madiya et al., 2013). Also, contributing to team projects for journal articles, academic seminars, conference papers, research activities, and ultimately academic success creates a doctoral identity. ( Madikizela-Madiya et al., 2013; Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011). Further argued is the suggestion that faculty relationships play a key role in helping doctorate students develop a sense of autonomy in their research and cultivating their doctoral identities and academic success (Baker & Pifer, 2011). Taken together, doctoral identity is shaped by a range of factors, including the supportive environment, academics and so also is the quality of relationships with advisors and peers, and mentorship.

## **Relationship**

Relationships are significant in doctoral education and impact doctoral students' academic success and doctorate identity. Hence, the quality of relationships with advisors and peers is critical in shaping students' research interests, teaching skills, and sense of doctoral identity and academic success journey (Baker & Pifer, 2011). More elaborately, a positive relationship with advisors, family and friends, and peers can provide students with essential resources, support, and guidance that can help them succeed in their academic careers as these relationships can provide students with

access to valuable resources, networks, and opportunities (Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011; Madikizela-Madiya et al., 2013). More importantly, a positive relationship between advisor and student brings along numerous benefits and rewards to a doctoral student; for example, relationships between faculty members and doctoral students can facilitate the development of research skills, transition through stage 2 into the role of an independent researcher, professional networks, and career opportunities and ultimately can be instrumental in securing research funding, grants, publishing research, and establishing a professional reputation (Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011). In the same way, positive outcomes of these relationships may include improved research skills, increased confidence in one's abilities as a researcher, and a greater sense of autonomy and ownership over one's research (Madikizela-Madiya et al., 2013). There seems to be a significant relationship between academic success, doctorate identity, and relationships.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this session provides a comprehensive synthesis of the research findings that analyzed the relationship between doctorate education, academic success, doctorate identity, and relationships. Academic success, doctorate identity, and relationships are all critical factors in doctoral education (Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011; Madikizela-Madiya et al., 2013). Doctoral Students who perform well in their doctoral programs have a strong doctorate identity and positive relationships with their advisors, faculty, and peers (Gardner, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011; Johnson & Smith, 2021; Smith, 2022). They are more likely to have successful academic careers (Johnson & Smith, 2021). The findings, therefore, highlighted the importance of providing high-quality doctoral programs that offer effective mentorship and resources to students to promote academic success, doctorate identity, and relationships. The key findings of the synthesis literature review underscore the importance of a holistic approach to doctoral education, one that considers the multiple dimensions of the transition from doctoral student to independent scholar.

Overall, future research on doctoral education should address the evolving needs and challenges of doctoral students in a rapidly changing academic and professional landscape while also considering the critical role of relationships, identity, and holistic approaches to doctoral education.

## References

- Baker, V. L., & Pifer, M. J. (2011). The role of relationships in the transition from doctoral student to independent scholar. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 33(1), 5–17.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037x.2010.515569>
- Garcia, S. A., & Lee, D. (2020). Understanding the Role of Graduate Advisors in Graduate Student Success: A Systematic Literature Review. *Educational Researcher*, 49(6), 397–407.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20915151>
- Gardner, S. K. (2009). Conceptualizing Success in Doctoral Education: Perspectives of Faculty in Seven Disciplines. *The Review of Higher Education*, 32(3), 383–406.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.0.0075>
- Hovdhaugen, T. (2018). Doctoral education for the knowledge society. *Higher Education, Skills, and Work-Based Learning*, 8(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-08-2017-0077>

- Johnson, J. K., & Smith, J. H. (2021). Factors Contributing to Doctoral Student Success: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Higher Education*, 92(1), 1-27. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2020.1843406
- Madikizela-Madiya, N., Goba, B. B., & Nkambule, T. (2016). Developing a researcher identity: A reflective narration of postgraduate students supervision experiences in a research project. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 27(4). <https://doi.org/10.20853/27-4-271>
- Smith, L. M., & Hatmaker, D. M. (2014). Building a research agenda for independent scholarship. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 20(4), 545-564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2014.12001807>
-