

Assessing Scholastic Satisfaction Among Graduate Students at St. Louise De Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc.: A Basis for Institutional Enhancement

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Abstract: This study explored graduate students' scholastic satisfaction across five strategic domains: instructional quality, faculty support, institutional flexibility, resource accessibility, and holistic well-being. Quantitative ratings reveal high appreciation for faculty expertise ($\bar{X} = 4.76$), curriculum relevance ($\bar{X} = 4.72$), and research integration ($\bar{X} = 4.64$), underscoring the value of critical thinking, real-world application, and scholarly engagement. Faculty mentorship ($\bar{X} = 4.56$) and institutional flexibility ($\bar{X} = 4.55$) emerged as pivotal in supporting academic and personal balance. While services and facilities received a lower rating ($\bar{X} = 4.14$), students emphasized the need for improved digital infrastructure and classroom environments. Key challenges include financial instability, limited academic guidance, and emotional strain, yet students demonstrate resilience and commitment to their goals. Findings highlighted the importance of personalized instruction, diverse assessment methods, and interactive teaching formats. Students strongly endorse institutional enhancements in mental health services ($\bar{X} = 4.61$), digital transformation ($\bar{X} = 4.57$), and research funding ($\bar{X} = 4.57$), alongside calls for transparent feedback mechanisms. Conclusions affirm that faculty engagement, flexible policies, and well-maintained resources foster academic success and emotional well-being. Recommendations include expanding mentorship, upgrading facilities, diversifying instructional strategies, and implementing holistic support systems. These insights advocate for a responsive, student-centered approach to graduate education that integrates innovation, empathy, and strategic alignment with learners' evolving needs.

Keywords: Graduate Education, Faculty Mentorship, Instructional Quality, Institutional Flexibility, Student Satisfaction, Mental Health, Digital Infrastructure.

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I. INTRODUCTION

From a Church perspective, graduate education is not merely an academic pursuit but a sacred vocation rooted in the development of wisdom, character, and service. Christian institutions and theologians emphasize that education should be Christ-centered, Scripture-based, and socially applied to glorify God through one's intellectual and professional gifts. The Bible encourages the pursuit of wisdom—"Wisdom is supreme; so, acquire wisdom. And whatever you may acquire, gain understanding" (Proverbs 4:7)—and views learning as a form of stewardship, where individuals cultivate their talents to serve others and fulfill their divine calling (Matthew 25:14–30).

Faith-based graduate programs, such as those described by Evangel University, highlight the importance of

mentorship, spiritual formation, and ethical leadership. Professors in these settings are not only academic guides but also spiritual mentors who model Spirit-led professionalism and integrity. This aligns with the Church's broader vision of education as a transformative journey—one that shapes not only the mind but also the heart, preparing graduates to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

Incorporating this perspective at SLMCS, a Catholic institution, reinforces the mission of holistic student development. It affirms that graduate education should nurture both intellectual excellence and moral responsibility, equipping students to become compassionate and faithful leaders.

The graduate school of St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc. (SLMCSI) plays a vital role in responding

to the evolving economic and social needs of the province of Sorsogon. Rooted in its mission of holistic education and community engagement, SLMCSI equips graduate students with advanced knowledge, ethical leadership, and practical skills that directly contribute to regional development. As highlighted in recent stakeholder research, the institution is recognized for producing graduates who are not only academically competent but also socially responsive and spiritually grounded. Through programs that emphasize research, professional development, and community service, SLMCSI fosters a workforce capable of addressing local challenges—such as poverty reduction, educational reform, and sustainable development. By aligning its curriculum with industry demands and promoting partnerships with local employers and civic organizations, the graduate school ensures that its graduates are prepared to lead initiatives that uplift both the economy and the social fabric of Sorsogon. This commitment reflects the broader vision of Catholic education: forming individuals who serve as agents of transformation in their communities.

Graduate education demands a higher level of intellectual engagement, self-direction, and resilience. Unlike undergraduate students, graduate learners often juggle academic responsibilities with professional and personal commitments. This complexity makes scholastic satisfaction a multidimensional construct—one that includes not only academic rigor and support but also emotional well-being, institutional responsiveness, and peer collaboration. According to Deci and Ryan (2012), when students' needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are met, their self-motivation and well-being increase, leading to greater academic engagement and achievement. Emotional fatigue and academic workload have also been shown to significantly affect students' satisfaction and mental health, especially during transitional periods such as post-pandemic returns to campus (Mamani-Benito et al., 2024). Furthermore, Lorenzetti et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of peer relationships and mentorship in supporting both academic success and emotional well-being among graduate students, particularly those navigating complex social and institutional environments. At SLMCSI, recognizing these nuances is vital to cultivating an environment where graduate students can thrive both academically and personally.

SLMCSI has a longstanding commitment to academic excellence and holistic student development. However, as the landscape of higher education evolves—with increasing emphasis on student-centered learning, digital integration, and global competitiveness—the institution must continuously assess and adapt its strategies. According to Barr and Tagg (1995), the shift from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered paradigm requires institutions to prioritize student outcomes, engagement, and satisfaction over traditional instructional delivery. This transformation is further accelerated by technological advancements and the growing demand for flexible, inclusive, and globally relevant education (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

In this context, the present study serves as a diagnostic tool to evaluate how well current practices at SLMCSI align

with the expectations and needs of its graduate students. By identifying gaps and strengths in areas such as academic support, faculty engagement, and institutional responsiveness, the research aims to inform strategic initiatives that enhance the graduate experience. These may include the development of structured mentoring programs, expanded access to digital and physical research resources, and more efficient administrative systems tailored to the unique demands of graduate learners. As Kuh et al. (2006) emphasized, institutions that actively respond to student feedback and invest in continuous improvement foster environments that promote deeper learning, persistence, and overall satisfaction.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of scholastic satisfaction, this study will employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. Surveys will capture measurable indicators such as satisfaction with curriculum design, faculty accessibility, and campus facilities. Meanwhile, interviews and focus groups will provide deeper insights into students' lived experiences, perceptions, and suggestions for improvement. This mixed-methods approach allows for a richer, more nuanced analysis that can inform both immediate interventions and long-term planning.

The outcomes of this research have the potential to influence institutional policy at multiple levels. For instance, if students report low satisfaction with academic advising, SLMCSI may consider professional development for faculty advisors or the creation of a centralized advising office. If access to learning resources is a concern, investments in library holdings, online databases, or collaborative study spaces may be warranted. Ultimately, the goal is to create a feedback loop where student input directly informs institutional action—thereby reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement.

The scholastic satisfaction of graduate students is a critical measure of the overall effectiveness and quality of higher education institutions. At St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc., understanding the factors that contribute to the academic contentment of graduate students is essential for continuous improvement and ensuring a supportive learning environment. This study aims to explore the various dimensions of scholastic satisfaction among graduate students at this institution, focusing on their perceptions of academic instruction, available resources, support services, and interpersonal interactions.

St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc., a member of the St. Louise de Marillac Educational System managed by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, has a long-standing tradition of providing quality education since its establishment in 1937. The college offers a range of graduate programs designed to cater to the diverse academic and professional aspirations of its students. These programs are supported by a robust curriculum that emphasizes spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, and social formation.

Graduate students at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc., are provided with various academic resources

and facilities aimed at enhancing their learning experiences. The college's commitment to academic excellence is reflected in its continuous efforts to upgrade its infrastructure and provide state-of-the-art facilities. Additionally, the institution offers comprehensive support services, including counseling, career guidance, and academic advising, to help students navigate their academic journey effectively.

The interactions between students and faculty, as well as among peers, play a significant role in shaping the scholastic satisfaction of graduate students. Positive and supportive relationships within the academic community foster a conducive learning environment and contribute to the overall academic success of students. This study will delve into the nature of these interactions and their impact on students' academic experiences.

The researcher believes that this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the scholastic satisfaction of graduate students at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc. By examining the various factors that influence their academic contentment, the study aims to offer insights that can inform institutional strategies for enhancing the quality of graduate education and ensuring the holistic development of students.

While this study is focused on SLMCSI, its implications extend beyond the institution. By contributing to the limited body of research on graduate student satisfaction in regional colleges, it offers valuable insights for similar institutions facing comparable challenges. The findings may also serve as a benchmark for future studies, enabling cross-institutional comparisons and fostering collaborative efforts to elevate graduate education across the region.

The scholastic satisfaction of graduate students is a critical aspect of educational quality and student success. At St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc., understanding and enhancing this satisfaction is essential for fostering a supportive and effective learning environment. Graduate students at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc. (SLMCSI) face unique challenges and opportunities in their academic journey. Scholastic satisfaction encompasses various factors, including academic support, faculty engagement, learning resources, and overall student well-being. High levels of satisfaction are linked to better academic performance, higher retention rates, and positive post-graduation outcomes.

Previous studies have pointed out the importance of student motivation and engagement in academic success. However, there is limited research specifically focused on the scholastic satisfaction of graduate students at SLMCSI. This study filled this gap by exploring the factors that contribute to or hinder scholastic satisfaction among these students. The primary objective of this study is to assess the current levels of scholastic satisfaction among graduate students at SLMCS and identify key areas for improvement. By understanding these factors, the institution can implement targeted interventions to enhance the overall educational experience.

This research is significant as it provides insights into the academic experiences of graduate students, which can inform policy and practice at SLMCS. Improving scholastic satisfaction not only benefits the students but also enhances the institution's reputation and effectiveness in delivering quality education.

➤ *Objectives*

The following are the objectives of this research study that highlighted the academic experiences of graduate students at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc.:

- Assess how graduate students perceive the quality of academic instruction they receive.
- Determine the key factors that influence the overall scholastic satisfaction of graduate students.
- Investigate how the identified factors affect students' scholastic satisfaction.
- Identify the challenges encountered by graduate students along the identified factors.
- To identify and propose institutional enhancement activities aimed at improving support services for graduate school students at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc.

II. METHODS

The Mixed-Method Convergent Research Design employed in this study is particularly well-suited to address the multifaceted nature of graduate student satisfaction and institutional enhancement at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc. This design integrated both quantitative and qualitative data collected concurrently, allowing for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem.

The participants of this study consisted of graduate students currently enrolled in master's degrees during the academic year 2025–2026. To achieve balanced representation, the study employed a stratified random sampling technique.

III. RESULTS

The results obtained from the data gathered. Quantitative data and information are presented in an organized table, while qualitative data are organized in a thematic format. The findings are organized systematically to highlight significant patterns, trends, and relationships relevant to the objectives of this study.

A. *Perceptions of Graduate Students of St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc., on Quality Academic Instructions*

Table 1 presents the perceptions of graduate students from St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon Inc. regarding the quality of academic instruction they receive. The data highlighted the key areas of instructional delivery, including curriculum relevance and rigor, faculty expertise and teaching practices, and the integration of research within

the graduate program. Mean scores and descriptive ratings summarize how students assess each aspect, providing

insights into the overall effectiveness of the institution's academic offerings.

Table 1 Graduate Students' Perception of Academic Instruction Quality

Indicators	\bar{X}	Descriptive Rating
CURRICULUM RELEVANCE AND RIGOR		
Course objectives are clearly communicated.	4.75	Strongly Agree
Class discussions are engaging and thought-provoking.	4.61	Strongly Agree
Opportunities to apply theory to practice are provided.	4.66	Strongly Agree
Learning is applied to real-world problems and situations.	4.75	Strongly Agree
The curriculum contents are aligned with students' career goals.	4.84	Strongly Agree
Average Mean	4.72	Strongly Agree
FACULTY EXPERTISE AND TEACHING PRACTICES		
Faculty demonstrate mastery of subject matter.	4.80	Strongly Agree
Faculty are accessible for consultations.	4.70	Strongly Agree
Faculty respect diverse perspectives.	4.73	Strongly Agree
Faculty encourage critical thinking.	4.82	Strongly Agree
Instructional methods suit graduate-level learning.	4.77	Strongly Agree
Average Mean	4.76	Strongly Agree
RESEARCH INTEGRATION AND SCHOLARLY OUTPUT		
Faculty provide opportunities to learn about diverse research approaches and perspectives.	4.66	Strongly Agree
Application of research methodologies is encouraged in assignments and projects.	4.70	Strongly Agree
The curriculum incorporates interdisciplinary research perspectives.	4.73	Strongly Agree
Research is used to develop innovative solutions in academic work.	4.70	Strongly Agree
Opportunities to present research work in conferences or academic sessions are provided	4.41	Strongly Agree
Average Mean	4.64	Strongly Agree

➤ Curriculum Relevance and Rigor

Graduate students perceive the curriculum as highly relevant and intellectually rigorous. The highest-rated item, "The curriculum contents are aligned with students' career goals" (4.84), indicates that students find their academic experience directly applicable to their professional aspirations. Similarly, the ability to apply learning to real-world problems and situations (4.75) and opportunities to apply theory to practice are provided (4.66) reflect a strong emphasis on practical learning. The clarity of course objectives (4.75) and engaging discussions (4.61) suggest that instructional delivery is well-structured and interactive. Overall, students feel that the curriculum not only meets academic standards but also prepares them effectively for real-world challenges.

➤ Faculty Expertise and Teaching Practices

This domain received the highest overall rating, underscoring the exceptional quality of faculty instruction. Students strongly agree that faculty demonstrate mastery of their subject matter (4.80) and encourage critical thinking (4.82), which are essential for graduate-level learning. The instructional methods used (4.77) are seen as appropriate and effective, while faculty accessibility (4.70) and respect for diverse perspectives (4.73) contribute to a supportive and inclusive learning environment. These ratings suggest that students not only value the academic competence of their instructors but also appreciate their openness, responsiveness, and ability to foster intellectual growth.

➤ Research Integration and Scholarly Output

Students perceive research integration as a strong component of their graduate education, though slightly lower

than the other two domains. They feel encouraged to apply research methodologies (4.70) and explore interdisciplinary perspectives (4.73), which supports the development of advanced analytical skills. The opportunity to use research for innovative academic work (4.70) reflects a culture of inquiry and creativity. However, the lowest score in this domain—"Opportunities to present research work in conferences or academic sessions are provided" (4.41)—suggests that while research is embedded in the curriculum, opportunities for scholarly dissemination may be limited. Enhancing platforms for student research presentations could further strengthen this area.

➤ Overall Insights

Across all three domains, graduate students express strong satisfaction with the quality of academic instruction. The curriculum is viewed as relevant and career-oriented, faculty are seen as experts and effective educators, and research is well-integrated into the learning experience. The consistently high ratings (all above 4.60) reflect a graduate program that is both academically rigorous and responsive to student needs.

While the overall perception is highly positive, the data points to a few areas for potential improvement. Institutions may consider expanding opportunities for students to present their research, offering more flexible academic structures, and continuing to innovate instructional methods. These enhancements could further elevate student satisfaction and ensure that graduate programs remain dynamic, inclusive, and professionally enriching.

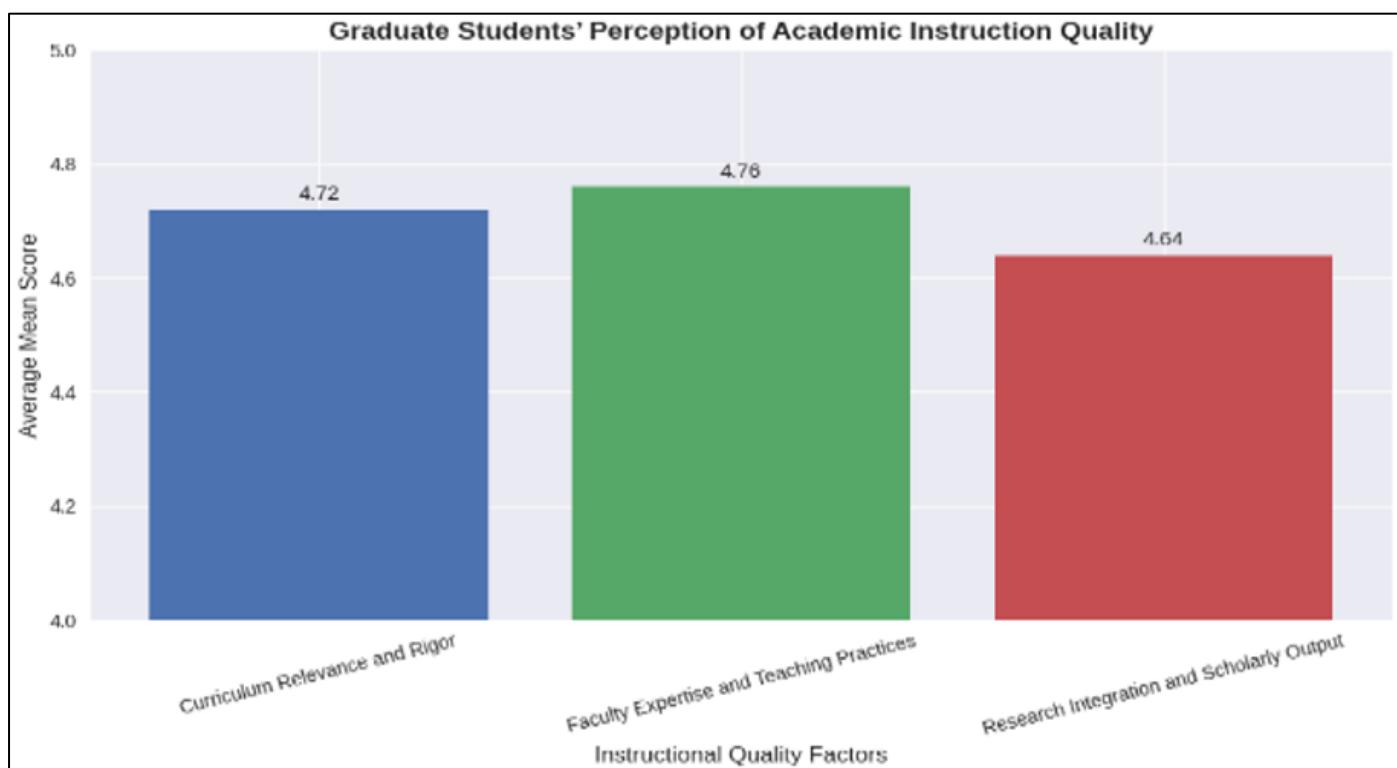


Fig 1 Bar Graph Illustrating Graduate Students' Perception of Academic Instruction Quality Across Three Key Factors

Graduate students perceive the quality of academic instruction in their program as exceptionally high across all measured domains. In terms of curriculum relevance and rigor, students strongly agree that their courses are clearly structured, intellectually engaging, and aligned with their professional goals. With an average rating of 4.72, they feel encouraged to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations and appreciate how the curriculum prepares them for real-world challenges. The clarity of course objectives and the relevance of content to career aspirations contribute significantly to their academic satisfaction.

The domain of faculty expertise and teaching practices received the highest average rating of 4.76, indicating that students hold their instructors in high regard. Faculty are seen as masters of their subject matter, capable of fostering critical thinking and delivering instruction suited to graduate-level learning. Their accessibility outside of class and respect for diverse perspectives create a supportive and inclusive environment. These qualities not only enhance the learning experience but also build trust and motivation among students.

In the area of research integration and scholarly output, students also expressed strong agreement, with an average rating of 4.64. They feel encouraged to explore diverse research methodologies and apply them in their academic work. The curriculum incorporates interdisciplinary perspectives and promotes innovation through research. However, the slightly lower score for opportunities to present research, with a mean score of 4.41, suggests that while research is well-integrated, institutions could further support students by providing more platforms for scholarly dissemination, such as conferences and academic forums.

The consistently high ratings across all domains reflect a graduate program that is both academically rigorous and responsive to student needs. The curriculum is relevant and practical, faculty are knowledgeable and approachable, and research is meaningfully embedded in the learning process. These strengths contribute to a well-rounded and fulfilling graduate experience.

To further enhance satisfaction, institutions may consider expanding opportunities for research presentation, increasing flexibility in academic schedules, and continuing to innovate teaching methods. Addressing these areas would not only improve student outcomes but also ensure that graduate programs remain dynamic, inclusive, and aligned with evolving academic and professional standards.

➤ *Aspects of Academic Instruction, Most Effective or Needing Improvement:*

• *Research-Oriented Instruction*

Many participants found research-focused instruction to be highly effective. Participant 1 stated that "Methods of Research" was the most effective aspect of their academic experience, while Participant 11 emphasized the "pragmatic way of teaching in research" as a strength. Participant 13 noted that "most of the faculty members demonstrate mastery of the subject area, particularly Research Methodology and Statistics," which contributed to the quality of instruction. However, Participant 4 suggested that the institution could improve by exposing students to more research activities through "seminar-workshops, collaboration with other academic institutions, and providing resources and platforms for research publication initiatives."

- *Graduate-Level Alignment*

Instruction that aligns with the needs of graduate students was also praised. Participant 3 highlighted that “the alignment of the instruction to the current needs of the graduate students is the most effective,” and Participant 5 affirmed that “the institutional methods suit graduate-level learning.” Participant 13 added that while instruction is strong, there is room for improvement through “more program offerings that are aligned to one’s career goals.”

- *Technology and ICT Integration*

The use of technology in instruction was seen as a major contributor to effectiveness. Participant 6 shared that instruction is “most effective when ICT is being used or implemented,” and Participant 16 emphasized the value of “clear explanations, interactive activities, and use of technology that makes learning engaging.” On the other hand, Participant 18 pointed out that during online classes, “there is insufficient feedback from professors and also the assessment focuses only on exams,” indicating a need for more interactive and responsive digital learning environments.

- *Real-World Application and Active Learning*

Several participants appreciated instruction that incorporated real-world skills and active learning strategies. Participant 7 found the “integration of real-world skills and student-centered learning” most effective, while Participant 8 noted that “active learning strategies... keep students engaged and promote deeper understanding.” Participant 17 valued “giving task, case study, and reading materials,” and Participant 19 emphasized “interactive teaching methods, like group discussions, case studies, and problem-solving exercises,” which help foster deeper understanding and active participation. Participant 20 preferred professors “sharing their knowledge and experiences while avoiding the usual reporting style,” suggesting a preference for more dynamic and experiential teaching methods.

- *Instructor Presence and Expertise*

The presence and proficiency of instructors were frequently cited as key strengths. Participant 10 described the instruction as “highly proficient and excellent,” and

Participant 12 stated that “the presence of the instructor” was the most effective aspect, although they also noted that “time management of the lessons or topics” needed improvement. Participant 14 praised “instructors/professors that are great at doing their jobs,” while Participant 15 simply stated that “the academic instruction provided by the professors is already excellent.

- *Personalized Instruction and Assessment*

Some participants expressed a desire for more personalized and varied instructional approaches. Participant 16 suggested that improvement is needed in “providing more personalized instruction for different learners and using diverse assessment methods.” Similarly, Participant 18 highlighted that during online classes, “there is insufficient feedback from professors and also the assessment focuses only on exams,” pointing to a need for more holistic and student-responsive evaluation practices.

- *Instructional Delivery and Format*

Some viewed traditional lecture-heavy formats as less effective. Participant 2 remarked that “some courses rely heavily on lectures which can feel one-sided,” suggesting a need for more interactive teaching methods. Participant 12 also noted that “time management of the lessons or topics” could be improved, and Participant 14 pointed out that “classrooms” themselves were an area needing enhancement, indicating that both delivery and infrastructure play a role in instructional quality.

B. Factors Contributing to the Overall Scholastic Satisfaction of Graduate Students

Table 2 illustrates the factors that contribute to the overall scholastic satisfaction of graduate students. It highlights their perceptions of the key factors that influence their academic experience, including the quality of services and facilities, the level of faculty support and mentorship, and the institution’s ability to promote work-life balance through flexible arrangements. The mean scores and descriptive ratings provide a clear overview of how these factors shape students’ satisfaction within the graduate program.

Table 2 Factors that Contribute to the Overall Scholastic Satisfaction of Graduate Students

Indicators	\bar{X}	Descriptive Rating
QUALITY OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES		
The classrooms are comfortable and conducive to learning	4.09	Agree
Access to required online resources is available.	4.02	Agree
The campus has adequate and well-maintained study spaces	4.39	Strongly Agree
The technology resources available to students are sufficient and up to date	3.93	Agree
Awareness of available personal support services is evident among students (e.g., counseling, health services)	4.27	Strongly Agree
Average Mean	4.14	Agree
FACULTY SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP		
Adequate support from adviser and other faculty members has been received.	4.52	Strongly Agree
Constructive and helpful feedback from faculty on academic work has been provided.	4.52	Strongly Agree
Faculty members provide effective guidance and support for research endeavors	4.48	Strongly Agree
Faculty members encourage and motivate students to achieve academic and professional goals	4.70	Strongly Agree
Students feel comfortable approaching faculty members with questions or concerns	4.59	Strongly Agree
Average Mean	4.56	Strongly Agree

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL FLEXIBILITY		
Academic workload is manageable for students	4.55	Strongly Agree
Adequate time is available to balance academic responsibilities with work and personal life	4.45	Strongly Agree
The institution offers flexible arrangements between academic and work responsibilities	4.57	Strongly Agree
Students can balance their academic responsibilities with personal life effectively	4.59	Strongly Agree
Students are satisfied with the balance between their academic, work, and social life	4.57	Strongly Agree
Average Mean	4.55	Strongly Agree

➤ *Quality of Services and Facilities*

Graduate students generally agree that the institutional environment supports their academic needs, though this factor received the lowest average among the three. The highest-rated item in this category is the availability of adequate and well-maintained study spaces (4.39), suggesting that physical infrastructure plays a positive role in the learning experience. Students also express strong awareness of available personal support services such as counseling and health services (4.27), which contribute to their sense of well-being. However, technology resources (3.93) and access to required online resources (4.02) scored slightly lower, indicating that digital infrastructure and resource accessibility could be improved. Classroom comfort (4.09) was rated moderately, suggesting that while facilities are functional, enhancements in physical learning environments could further elevate satisfaction.

➤ *Faculty Support and Mentorship*

This factor received the highest overall rating, reflecting the strong rapport between students and faculty. Students feel well-supported by their advisers and instructors, with constructive feedback (4.52) and effective guidance for research (4.48) contributing to academic growth. The highest-

rated item—faculty encouragement to achieve academic and professional goals (4.70)—demonstrates the motivational impact of faculty engagement. Additionally, students feel comfortable approaching faculty with questions or concerns (4.59), reinforcing the perception of a nurturing and responsive academic environment. These results suggest that mentorship is a cornerstone of the graduate experience, fostering confidence, clarity, and scholarly development.

➤ *Work-Life Balance and Institutional Flexibility*

Graduate students strongly agree that their institution supports a healthy balance between academic, work, and personal responsibilities. The ability to manage academic workload for students (4.55) and effectively balance personal life (4.59) reflects a well-structured program that accommodates diverse student needs. Institutional flexibility is highly valued, with students affirming that flexible arrangements (4.57) and satisfaction with overall balance (4.57) contribute to their well-being. The slightly lower score for adequate time to balance responsibilities (4.45) suggests that while most students feel supported, some may still experience time-related pressures. Overall, this factor highlights the importance of adaptable academic structures in promoting student success and reducing burnout.

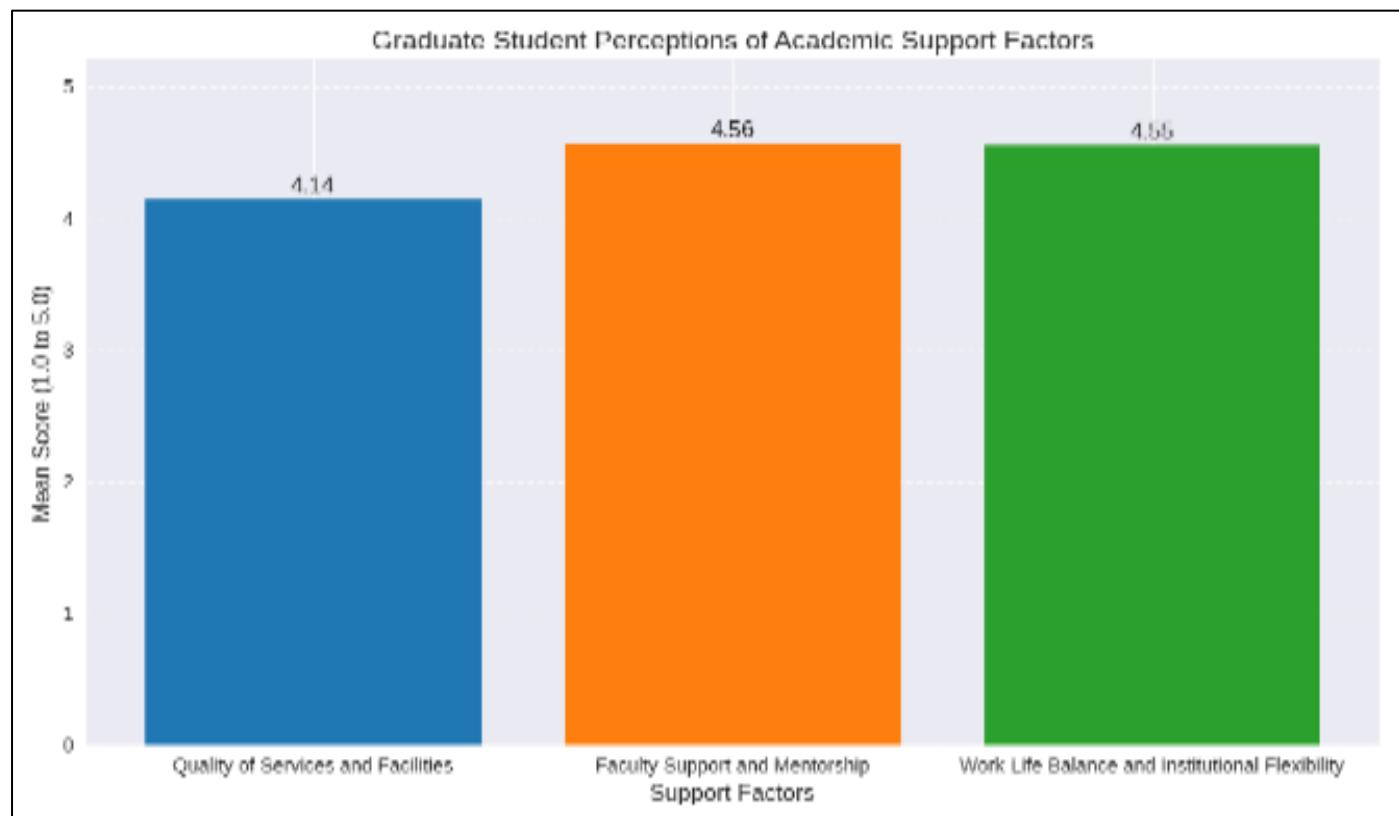


Fig 2 The Bar Graph Illustrates Graduate Students' Perceptions Across Three Key Support Factors

Work-Life Balance and Institutional Flexibility. Each factor is represented by its average mean score, providing a visual comparison of how students rate their academic environment and support systems.

The highest-rated factor is Faculty Support and Mentorship, with an average score of 4.56, indicating that students strongly agree they receive effective guidance, constructive feedback, and motivational support from their instructors. This reflects a strong culture of mentorship and accessibility, which plays a vital role in academic success and personal growth.

Closely following is Work-Life Balance and Institutional Flexibility, with a mean score of 4.55. Students feel that their academic workload is manageable and that the institution offers flexible arrangements that allow them to balance school, work, and personal life effectively. This high rating suggests that the program is responsive to the diverse needs of graduate students, many of whom juggle multiple responsibilities.

The lowest-rated factor, though still positive, is Quality of Services and Facilities, with an average score of 4.14. Students generally agree that classrooms are conducive to learning and that study spaces are well-maintained. However, slightly lower scores for technology resources and online access suggest areas for improvement in digital infrastructure and resource availability.

The graph highlights that graduate students are highly satisfied with faculty engagement and institutional flexibility, while modest enhancements in facilities and technology could further improve their academic experience.

➤ *Factors Contributing to Scholastic Satisfaction:*

• *Faculty Support and Teaching Quality*

Many participants emphasized the importance of faculty support, teaching expertise, and approachability in shaping their satisfaction as graduate students. Participant 2 shared that “having approachable professors who provide constructive feedback greatly enhances my learning,” while Participant 5 noted that “faculty members encourage and motivate me to achieve academic and professional goals.” Participant 9 highlighted the role of mentorship, stating that “faculty support and mentorship... provide guidance and support my research endeavors,” and praised their professor, Dr. Despi, for consistently offering encouragement. Participant 11 appreciated the “pragmatic way of teaching research” and described professors as “very approachable and humble, even if they possess higher ranks in DepEd.” Participant 12 simply stated that the “teacher factor and as well as the knowledge that they gave to us,” influenced their satisfaction, echoed by Participant 14, who said “teacher factor influenced my satisfaction as a student.” Participant 19 emphasized that “the engagement, clarity and expertise of professors... significantly enhance the learning experience,” and Participant 20 added that their satisfaction depends on “the quality of teaching, support from professors, available resources and meaningful peer interactions.”

• *Learning Environment and Campus Resources*

A conducive learning environment and access to campus resources were also key factors. Participant 3 expressed appreciation for the school itself, describing it as “a place which is conducive for all and my learning,” and especially valued “the manner of teaching delivery of the professors.” Participant 7 identified “conducive learning environment, approachable faculty/management, balanced activities” as influential. Participant 8 noted that “the campus has adequate and well-maintained study spaces/technology resources available,” while Participant 10 mentioned “good ambiance and excellent instructors/professors.” Participant 15 acknowledged that “faculty support and quality of services being provided influence my satisfaction,” but also pointed out that “there are still needs to be improved in the facilities/resources.”

• *Instructional Quality and Academic Opportunities*

Instructional quality and access to academic growth opportunities were highlighted by several participants. Participant 16 cited “the quality of instruction, supportive faculty, access to learning sources, and opportunities for research and professional growth” as key influences. Participant 11 also emphasized “the clarity and guidance provided in research instruction”. Participant 20 reinforced this by stating that satisfaction is shaped by “the quality of teaching, support from professors, available resources, and meaningful peer interactions.”

• *Flexibility and Consideration*

Flexibility in scheduling and institutional responsiveness were appreciated by some participants. Participant 1 mentioned “the flexible schedule available on Saturday” as a major factor in their satisfaction. Participant 13 valued “work-life balance and institutional flexibility,” explaining that they are “able to balance my academic responsibilities with my personal life.” Participant 17 simply stated, “There is always a consideration,” suggesting that the institution is responsive to student needs.

C. Factors that Impact the Scholastic Satisfaction of Graduate Students

The data below presents the major factors that influence the scholastic satisfaction of graduate students. These factors encompass various dimensions of the academic experience, including access to resources and support services, the conduciveness of the learning environment, and the extent of faculty accessibility and encouragement. Additionally, aspects such as academic guidance, emotional well-being, and the quality of faculty-student relationships play significant roles in shaping students’ satisfaction. The impact of work-life balance and institutional flexibility is also highlighted, emphasizing how time management, stress reduction, financial considerations, and overall well-being contribute to students’ academic performance and engagement.

➤ *Access to Resources and Supportive Services*

Many participants emphasized that the quality of services and facilities directly affects their scholastic satisfaction by providing easy access to essential academic

resources. Participant 1 noted that it “provides the students easy access to resources,” while Participant 12 highlighted the importance of “giving the right and just information regarding or in support of any graduate students may need.” Participant 5 elaborated that “high-quality services and well-maintained facilities, such as libraries, laboratory, and study space, enhance the learning environment,” and Participant 16 reinforced this by stating that “adequate library, laboratories, technology, and student services create a supportive environment.” Participant 9 added that these elements “support my well-being and enhance my academic performance,” and Participant 11 shared that “good services and facilities make us learn faster and easier,” helping students feel “supported and motivated.”

➤ *Conducive and Comfortable Learning Environment*

A comfortable and well-maintained learning environment was repeatedly mentioned as a key factor in student satisfaction. Participant 2 stressed that “all learners should experience a conducive and comfortable learning environment,” and Participant 3 observed that it “motivates the students to explore and learn better.” Participant 7 described how “good facilities create an environment that is safe and welcoming,” while Participant 10 emphasized that “academic factors, physical amenities and admin support... enhanced my positive learning view.” Participant 15 pointed out that the “learning environment affects the quality of the instructional delivery,” and Participant 18 stated that it “shapes the learning environment, academic performance, and well-being of the students.”

➤ *Impact on Academic Performance and Motivation*

Several participants linked quality services and facilities to improved academic performance and motivation. Participant 4 explained that “high quality boosts satisfaction by supporting learning and reducing stress,” and Participant 6 noted that “it will make one task easier and more manageable.” Participant 8 shared that “quality service leads to quality education,” encouraging students to “perform well with the help of quality technology.” Participant 13 emphasized that “satisfied students tend to perform better academically and are more likely to stay enrolled and recommend the institution to others,” while Participant 14 simply stated that “it makes students want to continue their studies.” Participant 19 concluded that quality services and facilities “enhance academic performance and reduce stress,” and Participant 20 added that when these are present, “it makes studying easier and more comfortable,” leading to greater happiness and satisfaction.

➤ *Accessibility and Encouragement from Faculty*

Participant 1 shared, “It is a great help for the students to have accessible faculty support.” Participant 3 added, “It encourages the students to pursue their studies and feel acknowledged and appreciated by the faculty.” Participant 6 emphasized, “They are not just helping to finish the course but also encouraging to continue despite many factors that can affect finishing it.” Participant 11 expressed, “It encourages us and feel motivated and confident in our studies. It also lessens our stress in our studies and enables us to balance our work and studies.” Participant 14 simply stated,

“It also makes us want to finish graduate studies.” Participant 20 concluded, “When faculty provide guidance and mentorship, graduate students feel supported, gain confidence in their learning, and become more satisfied with their academic experience.”

➤ *Academic Guidance and Research Support*

Participant 4 noted, “Strong mentorship increases satisfaction through guidance and encouragement.” Participant 5 said, “Supportive faculty members who provide guidance, feedback, and encouragement can greatly enhance students’ learning experience.” Participant 9 shared, “Their guidance provides effective support in my research endeavor.” Participant 16 stated, “Faculty support and mentorship affect scholastic satisfaction by providing guidance, encouragement, and expertise.” Participant 18 emphasized, “It directly influences academic success, personal growth, and professional development.” Participant 19 explained, “Effective mentoring provides students with academic guidance, research support, and professional development. All of which contribute to a more fulfilling and successful graduate experience.”

➤ *Emotional Well-Being and Motivation*

Participant 2 remarked, “It provides recognition and validation in fulfilling the degree.” Participant 7 stated, “Faculty support and mentorship affect scholastic satisfaction of graduate students’ mental health and academic performance.” Participant 8 added, “Quality mentorship boosts the morale of the graduate students.” Participant 13 shared, “It correlates with higher education engagement, better academic outcomes, and increased likelihood of degree completion.” Participant 15 said, “It reinforces the learning opportunities of every student.”

➤ *Positive Faculty-Student Relationships*

Participant 10 observed, “They seemed to be supportive. They offer the best educational services.” Participant 12 described, “Harmonious and friendly environment in each faculty and mentor builds a contagious learning to us (as their students).”

➤ *The Impact of Work-life Balance and Institutional Flexibility on Scholastic Satisfaction of Graduate Students:*

• *Work-Study-Life Balance and Time Management*

Many participants emphasized that institutional flexibility and support for work-life balance significantly enhance their scholastic satisfaction. Participant 1 shared that “the availability of graduate school programs in this school helps the students find more ways to have work-study-life balance,” while Participant 7 noted that it “gives graduate students opportunities to finish graduate studies with motivation because it balances personal, work, and study life.”

Participant 12 added that “balancing the two factors makes the life of each student,” and Participant 15 affirmed that “it helps us students to balance our academic, work, and personal responsibilities.” Participant 14 expressed that “if

there is work-life balance and institutional flexibility, the graduate students will find it easy to pursue graduate studies," and Participant 20 concluded that "having balance between school and personal life, along with flexible policies from the institution, allows graduate students to handle responsibilities better, feel less pressured, and enjoy their studies more."

- *Institutional Flexibility and Faculty Consideration*

Participants also appreciated the flexibility offered by the institution and the understanding shown by faculty. Participant 2 remarked, "Faculty members are considerate, they understand our situation outside school," and Participant 10 stated, "The institution offers flexible time/work arrangement." Participant 5 emphasized that "a supportive and flexible academic environment allows student to manage their responsibilities effectively to great satisfaction." Participant 3 noted that flexibility "allows the student to enjoy while studying," and Participant 6, while acknowledging challenges, said "it is somehow hard to balance time... but it will always depend on how many subjects someone has."

- *Stress Reduction and Well-being*

Reducing stress and promoting well-being were recurring themes. Participant 4 stated, "Flexibility improves satisfaction by reducing stress and promoting well-being," and Participant 11 shared that it "increases our satisfaction, lessens/reduces stress, and enables us to manage studies alongside work and personal life." Participant 13 explained that "graduate studies can be demanding, so achieving a healthy balance can influence the students' mental health, productivity, and relationships." Participant 16 added that work-life balance and institutional flexibility "impacts

scholastic satisfaction by reducing stress, allowing students to manage academic responsibilities," and Participant 18 summarized its effect as "reducing stress, supporting productivity and fostering engagement."

- *Financial Considerations*

Participant 8 raised an important point about financial pressures, stating that "financial matters are one of the reasons why some graduate students stop/quit studying," highlighting how institutional flexibility could help mitigate such challenges.

- *Academic Performance and Engagement*

Some participants linked work-life balance and flexibility to improved academic outcomes. Participant 9 shared, "It influenced my academic performance – it developed or more positive view on my academic journey," while Participant 18 and Participant 13 both emphasized how flexibility supports productivity and engagement, contributing to better scholastic experiences.

D. The Challenges Encountered by Graduate Students

Table 3 outlines the various challenges encountered by graduate students as reflected in their perceptions of academic, institutional, and personal concerns. These challenges span areas such as clarity of program expectations, availability of resources, faculty mentorship, access to conducive learning environments, and overall well-being. The mean scores and descriptive ratings provide insight into the extent to which these issues affect students' experiences and highlight areas that may require institutional attention and support.

Table 3 Challenges Encountered by Graduate Students

Indicators	\bar{X}	Descriptive Rating
The coursework in the graduate program often feels irrelevant to students' research interests	2.50	Disagree
Students struggle to receive adequate mentorship and guidance from the faculty	2.39	Disagree
The program's requirements and expectations are often unclear or poorly communicated	2.27	Disagree
The library resources (e.g., journals, databases, books) are often insufficient for research needs	2.68	Neutral
The library facilities and resources are often outdated or poorly maintained	2.64	Neutral
The technology resources (e.g., software, computers, and internet access) are often inadequate or unreliable	3.00	Neutral
The classrooms are often not conducive to learning	2.60	Neutral
It is often difficult to find adequate study spaces on campus	2.57	Disagree
The school often lacks adequate resources for graduate students' mental health and well-being	2.59	Disagree
The school is often unresponsive to graduate students' concerns and feedback	2.25	Disagree
Students often struggle to maintain motivation to complete their graduate degree	2.36	Disagree
Students often feel insecure about their ability to conduct and publish research successfully	2.41	Disagree
Students often find it difficult to balance their academic responsibilities with their personal life	2.48	Disagree
Students often struggle with their overall well-being (physical, mental, and financial health)	2.34	Disagree
Students often feel isolated from the academic community	2.11	Disagree
Students often lack opportunities to collaborate with other graduate students and faculty	2.39	Disagree
Students' financial situation often causes significant stress and makes it difficult to focus on their studies and research	2.86	Disagree
Students often regret their decision to pursue a graduate degree	2.07	Disagree

Based on the data provided, graduate students express a range of concerns across several dimensions of their academic experience, with most items falling within the "Disagree" range (1.9–2.59) and a few in the "Neutral" range

(2.6–3.39). This suggests that while students do not overwhelmingly endorse these negative statements, there are notable areas of dissatisfaction and institutional gaps that warrant attention.

In terms of academic relevance and clarity, students disagree with the notion that coursework feels irrelevant to their research interests (2.50), indicating that while some misalignment may exist, it is not a dominant issue. However, concerns about mentorship and guidance (2.39) and unclear program expectations (2.27) suggest that students may struggle with navigating academic requirements and receiving consistent support from faculty. These scores point to a need for clearer communication and more structured advising systems.

Regarding library and technology resources, students rated the sufficiency of library materials (2.68), maintenance of facilities (2.64), and adequacy of technology (3.00) within the “Neutral” range. This implies that while these resources are not perceived as severely lacking, they are not meeting expectations either. Similarly, classroom conduciveness (2.60) and availability of study spaces (2.57) hover near the “Disagree” threshold, suggesting that improvements in physical learning environments could enhance student satisfaction.

The data also highlight concerns about student well-being and institutional responsiveness. Students disagree that

the school provides adequate mental health resources (2.59) and that it responds effectively to student concerns (2.25). Additionally, low scores in areas such as motivation (2.36), research confidence (2.41), work-life balance (2.48), and overall well-being (2.34) reflect emotional and psychological challenges that may hinder academic progress. Feelings of isolation (2.11) and lack of collaborative opportunities (2.39) further emphasize the need for stronger community-building efforts.

Finally, financial stress remains a significant issue, with students rating its impact on their studies at 2.86—close to “Neutral” but still within the “Disagree” range. This suggests that while financial strain is not universally debilitating, it does affect many students’ ability to focus and thrive. The lowest-rated item, regret over pursuing a graduate degree (2.07), indicates that despite these challenges, most students remain committed to their academic journey.

The data reveal that graduate students face multiple systemic and personal challenges, particularly around mentorship, communication, well-being, and resource adequacy. Addressing these areas could significantly improve their academic experience and overall satisfaction.

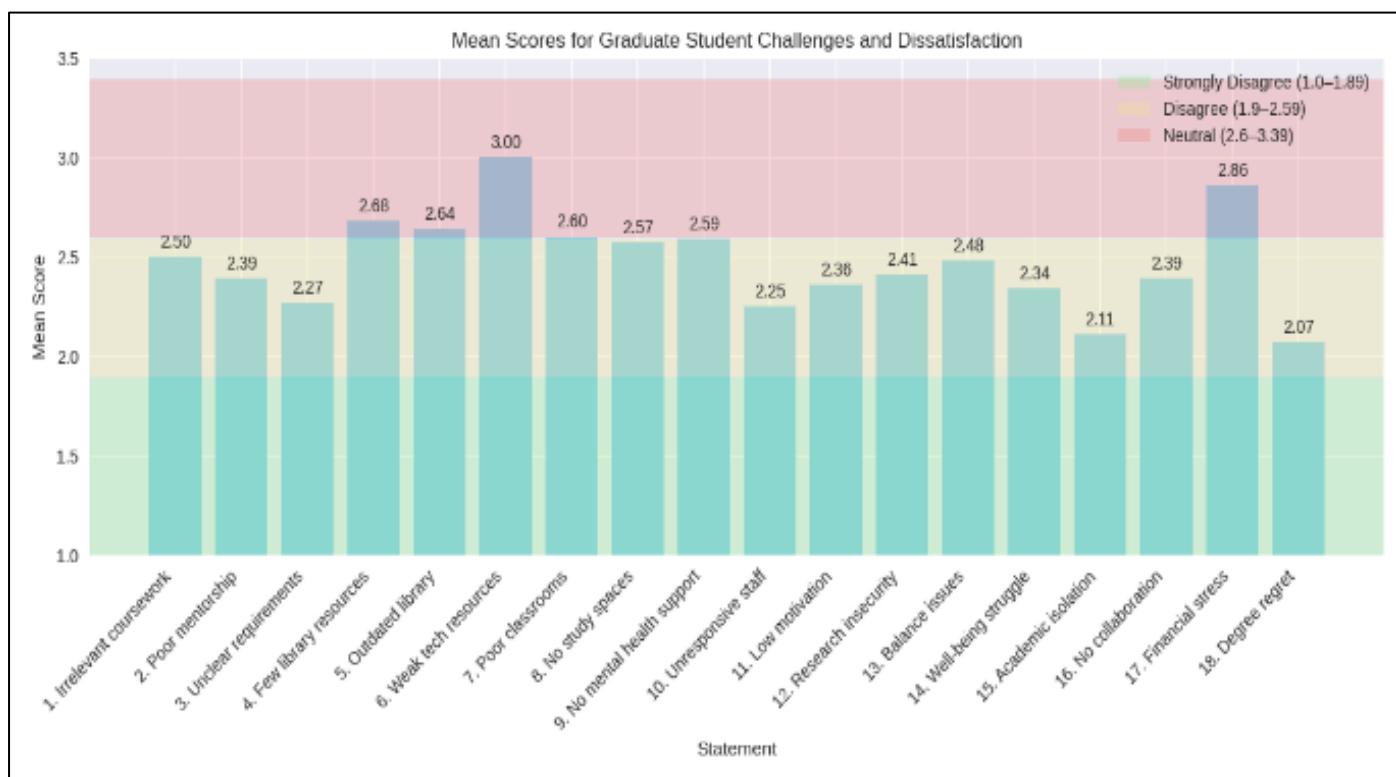


Fig 3 The Bar Graph Illustrates the Challenges that Graduate Students Encountered

Graduate students’ responses to the 18 negatively framed statements reveal a general trend of disagreement, indicating that most do not strongly identify with the challenges described. Most items fall within the “Disagree” range (1.9–2.59), suggesting that while these issues may exist for some, they are not widespread or deeply felt across the student body. For example, students largely disagree that their coursework feels irrelevant to their research interests (2.50) or that they regret pursuing a graduate degree (2.07), which

reflects a sense of purpose and commitment to their academic path.

Concerns related to mentorship, program clarity, and institutional responsiveness received some of the lowest scores, such as inadequate guidance from faculty (2.39), unclear expectations (2.27), and lack of responsiveness to student feedback (2.25). These results point to areas where institutions could improve communication and support

structures to better meet student needs. Similarly, feelings of isolation (2.11) and limited collaboration opportunities (2.39) suggest that some students may struggle to connect with the academic community, highlighting the importance of fostering inclusive and interactive environments.

Resource-related issues, including library and technology access, fall within the “Neutral” range, with scores like 2.68 for research materials and 3.00 for technology reliability. These ratings imply that while resources are not critically lacking, they are not fully meeting expectations either. Physical learning environments, such as classrooms (2.60) and study spaces (2.57), also received neutral to low scores, indicating that infrastructure improvements could enhance the overall academic experience.

Well-being and motivation are recurring themes, with students expressing moderate disagreement about struggling with motivation (2.36), research confidence (2.41), and balancing personal life (2.48). Financial stress (2.86) was the highest-rated concern, falling into the neutral zone, which suggests that while not overwhelming, financial pressures do affect students’ ability to focus and thrive. These findings underscore the need for institutions to provide more robust mental health, financial aid, and wellness support.

The data pointed out that the graduate student population is generally resilient and committed, yet facing pockets of dissatisfaction related to mentorship, resources, and well-being. Addressing these areas through targeted support services, clearer communication, and community-building initiatives could significantly improve the graduate experience.

➤ *Challenges Encountered by Graduate Students Along the Identified Factors*

Aspects of the graduate school experience most challenging or frustrating:

- *Financial Constraints*

Financial challenges were the most frequently cited source of frustration among graduate students. Participant 3 described the financial aspect as “the most challenging experience in graduate studies,” noting that it makes pursuing graduate education especially difficult. Participant 5 shared that their “financial situation often causes significant stress,” while Participant 9 stated, “Most challenging is my financial situation,” and added that “library resources – insufficient for my research needs” further compounded the issue. Participant 12 expressed frustration with “the financial matter, schedule, the distance from my work and school,” and Participant 13 admitted to doubting their ability to conduct and publish research successfully due to “financial constraint.” Participant 15 simply stated “financial instability,” and Participant 18 echoed this with “financial and time management” as key challenges.

- *Time Management and Work-Study Balance*

Balancing academic responsibilities with work and personal life was another major challenge. Participant 4 cited

“heavy workload, time management, financial strain” as a combined source of stress. Participant 10 explained, “Time constraints on my part because of the overlapping of activities/programs in my station as school head... sometimes the graduate study schedule needs to be sacrificed.” Participant 17 noted, “If I do not have enough time, conflict of schedule on work and studies,” while Participant 19 shared that “managing the balance between academic responsibilities and well-being” was one of the most challenging aspects of their experience. Participant 20 added, “When I cannot balance properly work responsibilities and graduate school responsibilities,” it affects their satisfaction and progress.

- *Institutional and Environmental Challenges*

Some participants pointed to institutional and environmental factors that hindered their learning experience. Participant 6 mentioned, “The distance of the school is my main challenge,” and added that “there are rooms that are not conducive to learning. It is hot.” Participant 12 also cited the difficulty of commuting from “Bulan-Sorsogon” as a source of frustration. These logistical and physical barriers contribute to stress and reduce the overall effectiveness of the learning environment.

- *Academic Demands and Research Pressure*

Academic challenges, particularly related to research, were also noted. Participant 7 said, “The most challenging is learning more about the updated research writing,” while Participant 8 pointed to “thesis/research writing” as a major hurdle. Participant 13 expressed doubt about their ability “to conduct and publish research successfully,” reflecting the pressure and complexity of graduate-level academic expectations.

- *Personal Motivation and Adjustment*

A few participants shared personal struggles with motivation and adjustment. Participant 1 admitted, “Motivating myself to finish the master’s degree” was a challenge, while Participant 2 observed that “people who are not yet in the teaching service find it difficult to adjust and relate,” indicating that prior professional experience can influence how easily students adapt to graduate school demands.

This synthesis reveals that graduate students face a range of challenges—from financial instability and time constraints to academic pressure and environmental limitations—all of which impact their scholastic satisfaction and ability to thrive in their programs

E. Strategic Institutional Enhancement Activities can be Developed and Implemented to Strengthen Academic, Administrative, and Psychosocial Support Services for Graduate School Students at St. Louise De Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc.

Table 4 presents the strategic institutional enhancement activities identified to strengthen academic, administrative, and psychosocial support services for graduate students at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc. These initiatives reflect students perceptions of areas where improvements can

significantly enhance the graduate school experience, including feedback mechanisms, faculty development, research support, digital transformation, and mental health

services. The mean scores and descriptive ratings highlight the level of student agreement on the importance and potential impact of each proposed enhancement.

Table 4 Strategic Enhancements to Be Implemented

Indicators	\bar{X}	Descriptive Rating
The institution seeks student feedback regularly	4.09	Agree
There are clear channels for student concerns	4.16	Agree
The college is committed to continuous improvement	4.32	Strongly Agree
Psychosocial support programs are needed and beneficial	4.39	Strongly Agree
Administrative processes should be streamlined	4.32	Strongly Agree
More academic enrichment activities should be offered	4.34	Strongly Agree
Faculty development programs enhance instruction quality	4.50	Strongly Agree
Graduate student organizations should be strengthened	4.50	Strongly Agree
Research funding and grants should be expanded	4.57	Strongly Agree
Alumni engagement can enhance graduate programs	4.39	Strongly Agree
Digital transformation should be prioritized	4.57	Strongly Agree
Interdisciplinary collaboration should be encouraged	4.50	Strongly Agree
Mental health services should be expanded	4.61	Strongly Agree
Feedback mechanisms should be more transparent	4.55	Strongly Agree
Support institutional efforts to improve graduate education	4.61	Strongly Agree

Graduate students express strong support for a wide range of strategic institutional enhancement activities, as reflected in consistently high mean scores across all 15 statements. The data reveal a clear desire for improvements that foster academic excellence, student well-being, and institutional responsiveness.

Students agree that the institution seeks feedback regularly (4.09) and provides clear channels for student concerns (4.16), though these scores are slightly lower compared to other items. This suggests that while feedback mechanisms exist, there is room to make them more visible, consistent, and impactful. The call for greater transparency in feedback processes is reinforced by the higher rating for “Feedback mechanisms should be more transparent” (4.55), indicating that students want clearer communication and follow-through on their input.

The commitment to continuous improvement is strongly affirmed (4.32), alongside the need to streamline administrative processes (4.32) and expand academic enrichment activities (4.34). These scores reflect students’ recognition of institutional efforts and their desire for more efficient systems and engaging academic opportunities. Faculty development programs (4.50) and the strengthening of graduate student organizations (4.50) are also highly valued, showing that students see professional growth and community-building as essential to a thriving graduate environment.

Support for research and innovation is particularly strong. Students strongly agree that research funding and grants should be expanded (4.57) and that interdisciplinary collaboration should be encouraged (4.50). These ratings highlight the importance of fostering a robust research culture and creating opportunities for cross-disciplinary engagement. Alumni engagement (4.39) and psychosocial support programs (4.39) is also seen as beneficial, suggesting that

students value mentorship, networking, and long-term institutional ties.

Finally, student well-being and modernization are top priorities. Mental health services received one of the highest ratings (4.61), underscoring the urgent need for expanded psychosocial support. Digital transformation (4.57) is also strongly endorsed, reflecting students’ expectations for modern, tech-enabled learning environments. The highest-rated item—support for institutional efforts to improve graduate education (4.61)—demonstrates a shared commitment to progress and a strong belief in the institution’s potential to evolve.

Graduate students advocate for strategic enhancements that improve academic quality, streamline operations, expand research and support services, and foster a more inclusive and responsive institutional culture. These insights provide a clear roadmap for targeted improvements aligned with student priorities.

➤ *Specific Institutional Enhancements are Recommended to Improve Graduate Student Support:*

• *Technology and Infrastructure Improvements*

Several participants emphasized the need for better technological access and physical learning environments. Participant 1 recommended to “strengthen internet access of the school for research and development,” while Participant 6 suggested “the use of PPT in every discussion and a more relaxing classroom.” Participant 17 added a practical enhancement: “air-conditioned rooms.” These improvements aim to create a more comfortable and resource-equipped learning space for graduate students.

• *Scholarships, Grants, and Financial Support*

Financial assistance was a recurring recommendation. Participant 2 proposed that “the institution should strive to

avail itself of scholarship offered by CHED (e.g., SIKAP) among others," and Participant 13 emphasized that "research fundings and grants should be given priority, especially for those academically capable but financially handicapped." Participant 15 echoed this by stating, "offer scholarship and grants," while Participant 4 recommended "more financial opportunities" as part of a broader support system.

- ***Mental Health and Well-being Services***

Mental health support was highlighted as essential for graduate student success. Participant 4 advocated for better mental health resources," and Participant 8 recommended "targeted enhancement that addresses academic, financial, and mental health needs. Participant 19 expanded on this by suggesting "expanded mental health resources, improved mentorship and advising, transparent funding and career, work-life balance initiatives," reflecting a holistic approach to student well-being.

- ***Academic and Research Support***

Improving academic services and research support was another key theme. Participant 11 advised institutions to "enhance the academic and research services by providing access to updated libraries and mentoring programs." Participant 9 proposed establishing "writing and research centers – spaces/workshops for research skills, academic writing, and publication preparation," while Participant 5 recommended "graduate student organization and enrichment" to foster academic community and collaboration.

- ***Flexible Learning and Scheduling***

Flexibility in academic policies and scheduling was seen as vital for working students. Participant 9 suggested "flexible learning options – offer hybrid to accommodate working students," and Participant 18 recommended "flexible academic policies, inclusive and conducive facilities." Participant 20 added, "I recommend having a more flexible class schedule and fewer reporting activities to make learning less stressful and more meaningful."

The answers of the participants revealed that graduate students value institutional enhancements that address financial support, mental health, academic resources, infrastructure, and flexible learning arrangements. These recommendations reflect a desire for a more inclusive, responsive, and supportive graduate school experience.

- ***Overall Quality of Academic Instruction in the Graduate Program:***

- ***General Satisfaction and Positive Perception***

Many participants expressed overall satisfaction with the academic instruction in their graduate program. Participant 1 described it as "good and flexible," while Participant 3 found it "satisfactory and worth recommending to other aspiring graduate students." Participant 6 stated, "I am very satisfied with the academic instruction," and Participant 13 echoed this by saying, "It is quite satisfactory, and it is evident with the number of enrollees every year." Participant 20 added, "The overall quality of academic

instruction in my graduate program is good because the lessons are clear and the professors are supportive," though they suggested "more flexible activities instead of too much reporting."

- ***Faculty Expertise and Instructional Strength***

Several participants highlighted the strength of the faculty and their subject matter expertise. Participant 5 shared, "The overall quality of academic instruction in my graduate program is generally strong. The professors are knowledgeable and passionate about their fields." Participant 8 described the instruction as "strong in subject matter expertise," and Participant 10 stated, "The quality of education instruction is outstanding."

Participant 11 praised SLMCSI for having "skilled and knowledgeable instructors, as well as approachable staff." Participant 14 emphasized that "all the professors are also excellent in doing their jobs," and Participant 15 noted that SLMCSI "really provides quality education in which the instruction delivery really engages the students to critical thinking."

- ***Meaningful and Challenging Learning Experience***

Some participants described their academic experience as intellectually stimulating and rewarding. Participant 7 said, "I would describe it as meaningful, challenging yet fruitful," while Participant 18 echoed this with "challenging yet meaningful." Participant 19 added a broader perspective, stating, "I would describe the quality of the academic instruction in my graduate program as strong and supportive, with a clear commitment to academic excellence and research innovation."

- ***Engaging and Supportive Mentorship***

Participant 12 highlighted the value of mentorship, describing the instruction as "fun and engaging mentorship with various knowledge acquired," suggesting that the learning experience is not only informative but also enjoyable and interactive. The narratives show that graduate students generally perceive the academic instruction in their program as strong, meaningful, and delivered by knowledgeable faculty. While most responses reflect satisfaction, a few also suggest areas for improvement, such as increasing flexibility and reducing repetitive reporting tasks.

- ***Areas where Academic Instruction in the Graduate Program could be Improved:***

- ***Instructional Methods and Practical Application***

Several participants suggested enhancing teaching strategies to make instruction more engaging and applicable to real-world contexts. Participant 5 recommended "integrating more real-world case studies and practical exercises," while Participant 20 proposed "more flexible schedules" and "using more interactive teaching methods" to make learning more meaningful. Participant 4 called for "more modern ideal" approaches, indicating a desire for updated and innovative instructional practices.

- *Research and Academic Support*

Improving research guidance and scholarly output was a key concern. Participant 7 identified the need for better “research, statistical mentorship and guidance,” and Participant 13 emphasized the importance of “focus more on research integration and scholarly output,” suggesting that “strategic interventions/enhancement should be implemented.” Participant 18 pointed out that “feedback and assessment” could be improved to better support academic progress, while Participant 19 recommended strengthening “advising and mentorship consistency,” along with “career preparation beyond academics.”

- *Facilities and Learning Spaces*

Some participants highlighted the physical learning environment as an area needing attention. Participant 6 mentioned that “the place or the classroom” was a challenge, and Participant 14 noted that “classrooms here are smaller in size compared to the standard classroom size of today.” Participant 12 also suggested improving “spaces for graduate school students,” and Participant 15 called for better “access to learning resources, such as a computer with internet connectivity.”

- *Student Support and Well-being*

Participant 19 emphasized the need for “mental health and wellness support and “administrative efficiency,” pointing to broader institutional support systems that could enhance the graduate experience.

- *No Improvements Needed (Satisfied Responses)*

Several participants expressed satisfaction with the current academic instruction. Participant 1 said “none, while Participant 3 explained, “I am already satisfied, and I really look up to the professors and the way they touch the hearts and minds of the students.”

Participant 8 stated, “Nothing to improve. For me it was best,” and Participant 10 affirmed, “All is well.” Participant 11 added, “I think none, because the instructors here are the best with their craft.”

The narratives of the participants reveal that while many graduate students are satisfied with their academic instruction, others see opportunities for improvement in teaching methods, research support, facilities, and student well-being.

➤ *Instructor Approachability and Accessibility Outside Class Time and its Impact on Graduate Student Learning:*

- *Instructor Approachability and Accessibility*

Most participants described their instructors as highly approachable and accessible outside of class time. Participant 1 simply stated, “Very approachable,” while Participant 3 elaborated, “I find them very approachable and accessible outside the class time. They are always willing to help and provide guidance whenever I need it.” Participant 6 shared, “In my experience, they are very approachable. This gives me confidence in my academic goals,” and Participant 7 added,

“They are very approachable outside of class time; their impact is that I feel motivated to finish my master’s.” Participant 8 noted, “They are very approachable, no burden created among students and instructors,” and Participant 10 affirmed, “Instructors are all friendly, approachable, and accessible.” Participant 13 echoed this sentiment, saying, “They are all approachable and accessible,” while Participant 14 emphasized, “The instructors are very approachable, and this brings a positive impact on our learning.”

- *Supportive and Responsive Faculty*

Participants also appreciated how instructors respond to student needs and concerns. Participant 2 shared, “Most of our instructors are very accommodating and considerate. They understand clearly why sometimes we cannot attend a face-to-face class, and they adjust it to an online class.” Participant 5 explained, “The accessibility greatly enhances my learning experience as I feel comfortable seeking clarification and guidance when needed,” and Participant 11 stated, “Very approachable and accommodating. Because of this, I am motivated to finish my graduate studies.” Participant 12 noted, “Most of the instructors are approachable and ready to assist, which can help the continuous learning of the students,” while Participant 15 added, “The instructors are very responsive to the concerns/queries brought by the students. In this manner, we are motivated by our learning process with the guidance of our instructors.” Participant 18 highlighted that “they are available even online, they are approachable and respond promptly to the queries,” which “positively impact my learning by making me feel supported and guided.” Participant 19 concluded, “I find most of my instructors to be fairly approachable and accessible outside of class, which has had a positive impact on my learning experience,” and Participant 20 shared, “They are approachable and responsive, which makes learning more comfortable.”

The answers showed that instructor approachability and accessibility were key contributors to graduate student satisfaction and success. Students feel more confident, motivated, and supported when instructors are responsive and available beyond class hours, especially when they accommodate personal and professional circumstances.

➤ *Personal Challenges Faced During Graduate Studies and Strategies for Overcoming Them:*

- *Financial Instability*

Financial challenges were among the most common personal struggles. Participant 1 cited “financial instability” as a major hurdle, while Participant 3 shared that “financial struggle” was the first challenge they faced, especially during their adjustment period after being hired in DepEd. Participant 6 noted, “First thing is the financial problem,” compounded by the distance of the school from their home. Participant 9 also mentioned “my financial situation, and Participant 20 added “financial problem alongside stress and time management difficulties. Participant 18 described financial challenges as part of a broader set of pressures, which taught them “resilience, discipline, and the importance of seeking support.”

- *Time Management and Scheduling Conflicts*

Balancing time between academic, work, and personal responsibilities was another major challenge. Participant 2 explained, “Transportation and time doing the activities that need to be done both in my regular work and in school” were difficult, but they managed by “adjusting and managing my time.” Participant 5 faced “challenges related to time management and balancing academic work with personal responsibilities,” and Participant 7 shared, “Personal challenges are balancing my work from weekdays... and also the tasks I have in my Saturday class,” which they overcame through time management. Participant 10 simply stated “time management” as their challenge, while Participant 14 said, “Conflict in schedule is the very challenge that I have faced, but I just manage my time.” Participant 15 described “balancing my schedule and prioritizing my graduate studies” as a recurring difficulty. Participant 17 and Participant 19 also emphasized managing time and maintaining a healthy work-life balance as key struggles.

- *Distance and Accessibility*

The physical distance between home, work, and school added to the difficulty for some students. Participant 6 mentioned that “the school is far from my home and sometimes it’s hard for me to come to school regularly,” and Participant 8 noted “distance of the school” and “simultaneous activity of the school and the graduate school” as personal challenges. Participant 12 and Participant 16 did not respond, but similar logistical concerns were echoed by others.

- *Stress, Pressure, and Mental Resilience*

Stress and emotional strain were also significant challenges. Participant 13 shared, “I find it difficult to finish my master’s because of my personal responsibilities – bringing back the momentum is quite hard.” Participant 18 described coping with “stress, self-doubt, and financial challenges,” and emphasized how these experiences taught them valuable life skills. Participant 19 stated, “It is managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance,” while Participant 20 added “stress and pressure” to their list of personal challenges.

- *Support Systems and Coping Strategies*

Some participants overcame their challenges through support and understanding from others. Participant 11 explained that “overlapping activities in my work... sometimes I was not able to attend Saturday classes,” but they overcame this “because of understanding professors and approachable colleagues.” Participant 18 also highlighted the “importance of seeking support” as a key strategy in overcoming personal difficulties.

The narratives reveal that graduate students face a range of personal challenges—primarily financial strain, time management, stress, and logistical barriers—but many have developed resilience and coping strategies, including time management, seeking support, and relying on understanding faculty and peers.

➤ *The Impact of Financial Situation on Graduate Students’ Academic Focus and Research Engagement:*

- *Financial Stress and Academic Disruption*

Many participants shared that financial challenges directly affect their ability to focus on studies and research. Participant 4 simply stated that financial strain “creates stress,” while Participant 6 explained, “It has a big impact that sometimes I am not able to attend classes when I get short on my bus fare.” Participant 7 admitted that financial limitations “are sometimes the basis of whether I will continue my master’s or not, or delay,” and Participant 11 shared, “Sometimes it makes me think to stop my studies and settle with just earning units.” Participant 15 described how limited financial resources lead to feeling “stressed and anxious,” which affects their academic performance. Participant 18 elaborated that “the cost of tuition, allowance, and academic expenses creates additional stress that distracts me from concentrating on my studies,” and Participant 20 added, “My financial situation affects my focus because worrying about expenses can be stressful.”

- *Mental and Emotional Impact*

Some participants reflected on the psychological toll of financial instability. Participant 2, though not yet engaged in research, anticipated that financial pressure “will have a big impact on me mentally.” Participant 13 emphasized that finances are “the number 1 consideration – the determinant to the completion of my master’s degree,” highlighting how deeply financial concerns influence academic decisions.

- *Resilience and Motivation*

Despite financial challenges, a few participants expressed determination to persevere. Participant 3 shared, “It truly challenged me yet made me pursue and strive harder to finish this degree,” showing how adversity can fuel motivation. Participant 10 offered a contrasting experience, stating, “My financial readiness boosts my confidence to finish the study,” while Participant 12 noted that “financial stability helps me to have better focus on my studies.”

- *Minimal or No Impact*

A small number of participants reported little to no impact from financial concerns. Participant 1 stated “none,” and Participant 8 said, “It is okay. No major impact,” suggesting that financial stability or support systems may be in place for some students.

This synthesis reveals that financial circumstances significantly influence graduate students’ ability to focus, with many experiencing stress, disrupted attendance, and doubts about continuing their studies. However, some also demonstrate resilience and find ways to stay motivated despite these challenges.

➤ *Recommended Additional Support Services to be Offered to Graduate Students:*

- *Scholarships and Financial Assistance*

Many participants emphasized the need for financial support to ease the burden of graduate education. Participant 3 suggested “grants,” while Participant 11 recommended a “scholarship program” and the offering of “doctoral programs.” Participant 13 stated, “Scholarships and grants should be offered to graduate students,” and Participant 19 called for “enhanced scholarships and other financial support.” Participant 20 simply emphasized “scholarship,” and Participant 18 proposed a broader “financial support program” alongside other developmental services.

- *Mental Health and Wellness Services*

Participant 4 highlighted the importance of “mental health” support, recognizing the emotional demands of graduate studies. Participant 18 also included “career and professional development” and “flexible learning options” as part of a holistic support system that could help students manage stress and academic pressure.

- *Academic and Research Support*

Several participants recommended services that would strengthen academic performance and research capabilities. Participant 9 suggested “writing and research centers – spaces/workshops for research skills, academic writing and publication preparation,” while Participant 10 proposed “research training” to enhance scholarly output.

- *Campus Facilities and Connectivity*

Improving campus infrastructure was another area of concern. Participant 6 recommended “free internet access within the campus,” and Participant 15 added the need for “learning spaces with electric outlet and free internet connectivity,” pointing to the importance of accessible and well-equipped study environments.

- *Student Engagement and Promotion*

Participant 8 offered a unique perspective, suggesting that the institution should “promote the school / motivate other students,” indicating a desire for stronger community engagement and institutional pride.

Graduate students would like to benefit from expanded financial aid, mental health services, academic support, improved facilities, and initiatives that foster motivation and institutional connection.

➤ *Aspects of the Graduate School Program that Need to be Changed to Improve Students' Overall Satisfaction:*

- *No Changes Needed (Satisfied Responses)*

Several participants expressed satisfaction with their graduate program and did not recommend any changes. Participant 1 stated “None,” while Participant 3 shared, “None, timely, I am a satisfied and proud graduate student of SLMCSI.” Participant 6 also responded “None,” and Participant 9 echoed the same. Participant 10 affirmed,

“None. Institution offers best service/educational services,” and Participant 11 added, “None, because I am satisfied with my studies here in SLMCSI.” Participant 20 likewise stated “None,” indicating a strong level of contentment among these students.

- *Program Support and Mentorship*

Some participants suggested enhancements in academic support and mentorship. Participant 4 recommended “more support,” while Participant 19 proposed improving “the consistency, quality of mentorship” and ensuring “regular guidance from advisers” to help students receive “timely feedback and clear expectations.”

- *Curriculum and Program Alignment*

Curricular improvements were also mentioned. Participant 8 suggested the institution “implement the new curriculum being mandated by the Higher Education,” and Participant 13 reflected, “I wish I had taken up the program aligned with my specialization,” indicating a need for better program matching. Participant 14 added, “I would prefer if the school offered a Doctoral Degree,” pointing to a desire for expanded academic offerings.

- *Flexibility in Academic Requirements*

Participant 18 recommended increasing the “level of flexibility in academic schedules and requirements,” suggesting that more adaptable structures could improve student satisfaction and accommodate diverse needs.

The participants' suggestions show that while many graduate students are satisfied with their current program, others see opportunities for improvement in mentorship, curriculum alignment, academic flexibility, and expanded program offerings.

IV. DISCUSSION

This presents the discussion of the findings derived from the data gathered in the study. It interprets the findings in relation to the research objectives, theoretical framework, relevant concepts and previous research findings. This underscores the significant patterns, relationship, and implications of the data, providing a deeper understanding of the study's outcome and its relevance to the problem statements.

➤ *Perceptions of Graduate Students of St Louise De Marillac College of Sorsogon Inc. on Quality Academic Instructions*

The findings presented reflect a graduate education landscape that aligns closely with contemporary scholarly discourse on curriculum relevance, faculty expertise, and research integration. The high rating for-curriculum alignment with career goals (4.84) underscores the importance of outcome-based education (OBE), which emphasizes the alignment of learning outcomes with professional competencies. Llenaresas (2021) highlighted that curriculum relevance is achieved through constructive alignment among outcomes, instructional activities, and assessments, ensuring that students acquire competencies

suites for a technology-driven and globalized environment. This approach supports the integration of 21st-century skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, which are essential for real-world application and professional success.

Faculty expertise and teaching practices received the highest overall ratings, reflecting the critical role of instructors in fostering intellectual engagement and inclusivity. Bueno (2018) emphasized that graduate education thrives when faculty demonstrate subject mastery and promote critical thinking, which are foundational to advanced learning. The effectiveness of instructional methods and faculty accessibility contribute to a supportive academic climate, aligning with Daniels (2014), who argued that faculty must possess multifaceted skills to nurture holistic student development. Moreover, respect for diverse perspectives enhances the inclusivity of graduate programs, a factor increasingly recognized as vital in global education contexts.

Research integration, while positively rated, reveals a gap in opportunities for scholarly dissemination. The relatively lower score for presenting research (4.41) suggests a need for institutions to create more platforms for student engagement in academic discourse. According to Schomburg (2010), research productivity and dissemination were the key indicators of graduate program quality, influencing both employability and academic growth. The encouragement to apply research methodologies and explore interdisciplinary perspectives aligns with Minten and Forsyth's (2014) assertion that employability is shaped by the interaction between academic preparation and real-world application. Enhancing opportunities for conference participation and publication can thus strengthen the research culture within graduate programs.

The consistently high ratings across curriculum, faculty, and research domains reflect a graduate education system that is responsive to student needs and professional demands. However, as Chung and Yet (2009) suggested, continuous improvement through tracer studies and feedback mechanisms is essential to maintain relevance and rigor. Institutions should consider expanding research dissemination platforms, adopting flexible learning structures, and innovating pedagogical strategies to further elevate student satisfaction and academic excellence.

The perspectives shared by graduate students regarding academic instruction resonate strongly with contemporary scholarship on effective teaching practices in higher education. Research-oriented instruction emerges as a particularly effective domain, aligning with Hammer et al. (2015), who emphasized that graduate-level teaching should cultivate independent inquiry and critical thinking through evidence-based approaches. The mastery of faculty in research methodology and statistics, as noted by participants, reflects the importance of disciplinary expertise in fostering scholarly rigor. However, the call for more seminar-workshops and collaborative research platforms echoes Schomburg's (2010) assertion that research dissemination

and academic networking are vital for graduate employability and intellectual development.

Graduate-level alignment is another area of strength, with students appreciating instruction tailored to their professional and academic needs. This supports the findings of Llenaresas (2021), who advocated for outcomes-based education that aligns curricular content with career trajectories and societal demands. The suggestion for more program offerings tailored to career goals reflects the dynamic nature of graduate education, where flexibility and relevance are key to student satisfaction and success.

Technology and ICT integration is widely recognized as a catalyst for effective instruction. Mladenovici et al. (2022) argued that digital tools enhance engagement and accessibility, especially in science education. Participants' appreciation for interactive technologies and clear explanations aligns with the student-centered paradigm described by Woods and Copur-Gencturk (2024), promoted active learning and peer collaboration. However, concerns about limited feedback and exam-centric assessments during online classes highlighted the need for more responsive and formative evaluation methods, as emphasized by Paolini (2015), who underscored the role of feedback in enhancing teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Real-world application and active learning strategies are praised for their capacity to deepen understanding and foster engagement. The integration of case studies, problem-solving tasks, and experiential teaching aligns with the student-centered model advocated by Murphy et al. (2021), which encouraged learners to take ownership of their education. These methods not only promote critical thinking but also prepare students for complex professional challenges.

Instructor presence and expertise remain foundational to instructional quality. The recognition of faculty proficiency and engagement supports Daniels (2014), who highlighted the multifaceted role of educators in shaping graduate learning environments. However, time management and classroom infrastructure are noted as areas needing improvement, suggesting that logistical and environmental factors also influence instructional effectiveness.

Finally, the call for personalized instruction and diverse assessment methods reflects a growing emphasis on inclusivity and learner responsiveness. As highlighted by Hammer et al. (2015), effective teaching involved adapting to diverse learning styles and fostering self-directed learning. The critique of lecture-heavy formats and the need for more interactive delivery underscore the importance of pedagogical innovation in graduate education.

➤ *Factors Contributing to the Overall Scholastic Satisfaction of Graduate Students*

The findings regarding quality of services and facilities, faculty support, and work-life balance in graduate education reflect broader trends in higher education literature emphasizing holistic student support and institutional responsiveness. The relatively lower rating for services and

facilities, particularly in technology resources and online material access, aligns with the observations of Almahasees et al. (2021), who argued that digital infrastructure is a critical determinant of student satisfaction in blended and online learning environments. While well-maintained study spaces and awareness of counseling services contribute positively to the academic experience, the need for improved digital access suggests that institutions must invest in robust learning management systems and ICT tools to meet evolving student expectations (Mladenovici et al., 2022).

Faculty support and mentorship received the highest ratings, underscoring the pivotal role of faculty in shaping graduate student success. According to Paolini (2015), effective mentorship enhanced student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. The high scores for faculty encouragement and accessibility reflect a culture of trust and intellectual partnership, which is essential for graduate-level learning. This is supported by Daniels (2014), who emphasized that faculty who provide constructive feedback and personalized guidance foster deeper scholarly development and professional confidence.

Work-life balance and institutional flexibility are increasingly recognized as essential components of graduate education, particularly for adult learners managing multiple responsibilities. The positive ratings in this domain resonate with the findings of Hammer et al. (2015), who advocated for flexible academic structures that accommodate diverse student needs and reduce burnout. The slightly lower score for adequate time to balance responsibilities suggests that while flexibility is present, time management remains a challenge for some students. As Llenaresas (2021) noted, institutions must continuously adapt their programs to ensure alignment with student lifestyles and career trajectories, promoting both academic success and personal well-being.

The data pointed out the importance of a supportive institutional environment that integrates physical infrastructure, faculty mentorship, and flexible academic policies. Enhancing digital resources, expanding personalized support, and maintaining responsive faculty engagement are key strategies for sustaining high levels of graduate student satisfaction and success.

The factors contributing to scholastic satisfaction among graduate students—faculty support, instructional quality, campus resources, and institutional flexibility—are well-supported by contemporary academic literature. Faculty support and teaching quality consistently emerge as the most influential elements in student satisfaction. According to Paolini (2015), the presence of approachable, knowledgeable, and responsive faculty fostered a positive learning climate that enhance student engagement and academic performance. The emphasis on mentorship and constructive feedback, as noted by several participants, aligns with Daniels (2014), who argued that faculty who actively mentor and guide students contribute significantly to their scholarly development and professional confidence.

The learning environment and access to campus resources also play a critical role in shaping scholastic satisfaction. Mladenovici et al. (2022) highlighted that well-maintained physical spaces and access to technology resources are essential for creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Participants' appreciation for study spaces, campus ambiance, and technology infrastructure reflects the importance of environmental factors in supporting academic success. Moreover, the availability of supportive services such as counseling and health resources contributes to student well-being, which is increasingly recognized as integral to academic achievement (Almahasees et al., 2021).

Instructional quality and academic opportunities further enhance satisfaction by promoting intellectual growth and career readiness. Llenaresas (2021) emphasized that outcome-based education, which aligns instruction with professional goals and research engagement, leads to higher levels of student satisfaction. The participants' recognition of clear instruction, access to research opportunities, and meaningful peer interactions supports this framework, suggesting that academic rigor combined with practical relevance fosters deeper learning.

Flexibility and institutional responsiveness are particularly important for graduate students managing multiple responsibilities. Hammer et al. (2015) advocated for adaptable academic structures that accommodate diverse student needs, reduce stress, and promote work-life balance. The participants' appreciation for flexible scheduling and institutional consideration reflects a supportive academic culture that values student autonomy and well-being.

In terms of impact, access to resources and supportive services directly influences students' ability to engage with their studies effectively. As noted by Schomburg (2010), the availability of academic resources such as libraries, laboratories, and digital tools enhances learning outcomes and supports employability. A conducive and comfortable learning environment not only motivates students but also improves instructional delivery and academic performance, as affirmed by Murphy et al. (2021). These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of scholastic satisfaction, which is shaped by both interpersonal and infrastructural dimensions of graduate education.

The impact of institutional services, faculty support, and mentorship on academic performance and motivation is well-documented in scholarly literature and strongly reflected in the participants' responses. Quality services and facilities—such as well-maintained study spaces, accessible technology, and supportive infrastructure—are consistently linked to enhanced academic outcomes. As Almahasees et al. (2021) argued, institutional quality directly influences student engagement and performance, particularly when digital tools and learning environments are optimized to reduce stress and support task completion. The participants' emphasis on comfort, ease, and satisfaction aligns with the findings of Mladenovici et al. (2022), who highlighted that conducive environments foster deeper learning and sustained motivation.

Faculty accessibility and encouragement play a pivotal role in motivating students and sustaining their academic journey. Paolini (2015) emphasized that faculty who are approachable and responsive contribute to students' sense of belonging and academic confidence. This is echoed in the participants' reflections on how mentorship and guidance help them balance academic and personal responsibilities, reduce stress, and maintain motivation. Daniels (2014) further supported this by noting that faculty engagement is a cornerstone of graduate education, influencing persistence and degree completion.

Academic guidance and research support are particularly influential in shaping graduate students' scholarly satisfaction. Llenaresas (2021) underscored the importance of outcome-based education and faculty mentorship in fostering research competence and professional development. The participants' appreciation for feedback, research guidance, and scholarly encouragement reflects a learning culture that values inquiry and intellectual growth. Schomburg (2010) also noted that mentorship and academic support are critical for employability and long-term success, reinforcing the importance of faculty-student collaboration.

Emotional well-being and motivation are deeply intertwined with academic satisfaction. As Murphy et al. (2021) suggested, student-centered learning environments that prioritize mental health and emotional support lead to higher engagement and academic achievement. The participants' recognition of validation, morale, and mental health support through faculty relationships illustrates the holistic impact of mentorship on graduate education. Positive faculty-student relationships, described as harmonious and contagious, contribute to a nurturing academic climate that enhances both performance and personal growth.

The integration of quality services, accessible faculty support, and meaningful mentorship creates a dynamic and responsive graduate education experience. These factors not only improve academic performance but also foster emotional resilience, professional development, and long-term motivation.

➤ *Factors that Impact the Scholastic Satisfaction of Graduate Students*

The factors contributing to scholastic satisfaction among graduate students—particularly faculty support, instructional quality, campus resources, and institutional flexibility—are deeply interwoven with academic performance, emotional well-being, and motivation. Faculty support and teaching quality consistently emerge as the most influential contributors to student satisfaction. Participants emphasized the importance of approachable professors, constructive feedback, and mentorship, which aligns with Paolini (2015), who asserted that effective teaching and faculty engagement significantly enhance student learning outcomes and motivation. The presence of faculty who are not only knowledgeable but also empathetic and responsive fosters a nurturing academic environment, as supported by Daniels (2014), who highlighted the multifaceted role of

educators in promoting both intellectual and emotional development.

The learning environment and access to campus resources also play a pivotal role in shaping scholastic satisfaction. Participants praised the availability of well-maintained study spaces and technology resources, which are essential for academic success. Mladenovici et al. (2022) emphasized that a conducive learning environment—characterized by adequate infrastructure and supportive services—enhances student engagement and reduces stress. This is further supported by Almahasees et al. (2021), who found that access to digital tools and physical amenities directly correlates with student satisfaction, especially in blended and online learning contexts.

Instructional quality and academic opportunities were frequently cited as key influences on satisfaction. Participants valued clarity in instruction, access to research guidance, and opportunities for professional growth. Llenaresas (2021) advocated for outcomes-based education that aligns instructional delivery with career goals and research competencies, thereby fostering deeper engagement and academic fulfillment. The integration of research support and mentorship, as described by participants, reflects a learning culture that values inquiry and scholarly development—an essential component of graduate education according to Schomburg (2010).

Flexibility and institutional consideration also contribute significantly to student satisfaction. Participants appreciated flexible scheduling and the institution's responsiveness to personal and academic needs. Hammer et al. (2015) argued that adaptable academic structures are crucial for supporting diverse learners, particularly those balancing work, family, and studies. Such flexibility not only reduces burnout but also promotes persistence and degree completion.

The impact of these factors on academic performance and motivation is profound. Participants linked high-quality services and faculty support to improved academic outcomes, reduced stress, and increased motivation. Emotional well-being, fostered through mentorship and positive faculty-student relationships, was also highlighted as a critical component of scholastic satisfaction. Murphy et al. (2021) emphasized that student-centered learning environments that prioritize emotional support and community-building lead to higher engagement and academic success. The sense of belonging and validation described by participants reinforces the importance of holistic support in graduate education.

The data underscores that scholastic satisfaction is shaped by a constellation of interrelated factors—faculty engagement, instructional quality, resource accessibility, institutional flexibility, and emotional support. Addressing these dimensions can lead to a more enriching and successful graduate experience, as affirmed by contemporary scholarship.

Work-life balance and institutional flexibility are critical determinants of scholastic satisfaction among graduate students, as they directly influence academic performance, emotional well-being, and student engagement. The participants' reflections underscore the importance of flexible academic structures that accommodate the complex realities of adult learners, many of whom juggle professional, personal, and academic responsibilities. This aligns with the findings of Hammer et al. (2015), who argued that institutional responsiveness and adaptable scheduling significantly reduce stress and enhance student motivation, particularly in graduate education, where time demands are high.

Institutional flexibility, including considerate faculty and customizable program structures, fosters a supportive learning environment that empowers students to manage their time effectively. As noted by Paolini (2015), faculty who demonstrated empathy and understanding contribute to a positive academic climate, which in turn enhances student satisfaction and persistence. The participants' appreciation for faculty consideration and flexible arrangements reflects a broader trend in higher education toward learner-centered models, which prioritized autonomy and personal agency (Murphy et al., 2021).

Stress reduction and emotional well-being are recurring themes in the data, with students consistently linking flexibility to lower stress levels and improved mental health. Mladenovici et al. (2022) emphasized that emotional resilience is a key factor in academic success, and institutions that promote balance and wellness are more likely to retain and support their students. The connection between work-life balance and reduced burnout is further supported by Almahasees et al. (2021), who found that flexible learning environments contributed higher engagement and satisfaction, especially in post-pandemic educational settings.

Financial considerations also intersect with institutional flexibility. As Participant 8 noted, financial strain can lead to attrition, a concern echoed by Müller et al. (2018), who found that financial stress negatively impacted academic performance and student retention. Flexible policies—such as part-time enrollment, weekend classes, and asynchronous learning—can mitigate these pressures by allowing students to maintain employment while pursuing their degrees.

The impact on academic performance and engagement is substantial. Participants reported that flexibility not only improved their academic outcomes but also fostered a more positive view of their educational journey. This supports the work of Llenaresas (2021), who advocated for outcome-based education that adapts to student needs and promotes professional growth. When institutions prioritize flexibility and balance, they create conditions for deeper learning, sustained motivation, and greater scholastic satisfaction.

➤ *The Challenges Encountered by Graduate Students*

The data presented reveal a nuanced portrait of graduate student experiences, highlighting areas of concern that align with broader trends in higher education research. While

students do not overwhelmingly endorse negative perceptions, the prevalence of responses within the "Disagree" and "Neutral" ranges suggests systemic gaps in institutional support and academic infrastructure. One of the most pressing issues is the lack of clarity in program expectations and inconsistent mentorship, with scores of 2.27 and 2.39, respectively. These findings echo the work of Johnson et al. (2016), who argued that structured advising and transparent academic pathways are essential for student persistence and satisfaction. Without clear guidance, students may struggle to navigate complex graduate requirements, leading to disengagement and reduced academic confidence.

Resource adequacy also emerges as a critical concern. Ratings for library materials (2.68), technology (3.00), and study spaces (2.57) suggest that while these areas are not severely deficient, they fall short of student expectations. According to Smith and Bath (2020), access to high-quality academic resources is a foundational element of graduate success, particularly in research-intensive programs. The near "Disagree" ratings for classroom conduciveness (2.60) and facility maintenance (2.64) further underscore the need for institutions to invest in physical and digital learning environments that foster engagement and comfort.

Student well-being and institutional responsiveness are among the lowest-rated dimensions, with scores for mental health support (2.59), responsiveness to concerns (2.25), and overall well-being (2.34) indicating significant dissatisfaction. These findings align with the research of Mladenovici et al. (2022), who emphasized that emotional resilience and institutional care are central to academic performance and retention. Feelings of isolation (2.11) and lack of collaborative opportunities (2.39) point to a need for stronger community-building initiatives, such as peer mentoring, interdisciplinary forums, and inclusive campus events.

Financial stress, rated at 2.86, remains a persistent barrier to academic success. While not universally debilitating, it affects students' ability to focus and thrive. Müller et al. (2018) found that financial strain correlates with lower academic engagement and increased dropout risk, particularly when institutions lack flexible financial support mechanisms. Despite these challenges, the low score for regret over pursuing graduate studies (2.07) suggests that students remain committed to their academic goals, reflecting a resilience that institutions can nurture through targeted interventions.

The data underscores the importance of addressing mentorship, communication, resource adequacy, emotional support, and financial flexibility to enhance scholastic satisfaction. As Paolini (2015) noted, a holistic approach to graduate education—one that integrates academic rigor with personal and institutional support—is essential for fostering meaningful and successful student experiences.

Graduate students encounter a multifaceted array of challenges that significantly affect their scholastic satisfaction and academic progression. Financial constraints

emerged as the most frequently cited source of frustration, with participants expressing stress and doubt about their ability to complete research or remain enrolled due to economic instability. This aligns with the findings of Müller et al. (2018), who emphasized that financial hardship is a major barrier to graduate student success, often leading to reduced academic engagement and increased dropout risk. The compounded effect of limited library resources and commuting costs, as noted by participants, further exacerbates financial strain and impedes access to essential academic tools.

Time management and the struggle to balance work, study, and personal life also pose significant challenges. Graduate students often juggle professional responsibilities alongside demanding academic schedules, leading to stress and compromised performance. Hammer et al. (2015) argued that institutional flexibility is crucial in supporting adult learners, particularly those in leadership or full-time employment rolls. The participants' experiences reflect this tension, with overlapping commitments and rigid schedules contributing to burnout and reduced scholastic satisfaction.

Institutional and environmental factors, such as inadequate facilities and long commutes, were also highlighted as barriers to effective learning. Poor classroom conditions and geographic distance diminish the quality of the academic experience and increase logistical stress. Smith and Bath (2020) noted that the physical learning environment plays a critical role in student engagement and satisfaction, and when these conditions are suboptimal, they can hinder both motivation and performance.

Academic demands, particularly related to research, present another layer of difficulty. The complexity of thesis writing, unfamiliarity with updated research methodologies, and pressure to publish contribute to anxiety and self-doubt. Llenaresas (2021) emphasized the importance of structured research support and mentorship in graduate programs, suggesting that institutions must provide clearer guidance and more accessible resources to help students navigate scholarly expectations.

Personal motivation and adjustment challenges were noted, especially among students without prior teaching experience. Transitioning into graduate-level academic culture can be daunting, and without adequate support, students may struggle to find relevance and confidence in their studies. As Paolini (2015) suggested, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose is essential for student persistence and satisfaction.

The challenges faced by graduate students—financial instability, time constraints, institutional limitations, academic pressure, and personal adjustment—are deeply interconnected and require comprehensive institutional strategies to address. Enhancing financial support, promoting flexible scheduling, improving facilities, and strengthening mentorship can collectively improve the graduate experience and support student success.

➤ *Strategic Institutional Enhancement Activities can be Developed and Implemented to Strengthen Academic, Administrative, and Psychosocial Support Services for Graduate School Students at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc.*

The data underscores a compelling endorsement from graduate students for strategic institutional enhancements that prioritize academic excellence, student well-being, and operational efficiency. The consistently high mean scores across all 15 statements reflect a proactive and engaged student body that values institutional responsiveness and continuous improvement. This aligns with the findings of Mladenovici et al. (2022), who emphasized that student-centered strategies—particularly those involving transparent feedback mechanisms and inclusive governance—are essential for fostering trust and academic engagement. The call for greater transparency in feedback processes, as evidenced by the 4.55 rating, suggests that students not only want their voices heard but also expect meaningful action and communication in response.

The strong support for streamlining administrative processes (4.32) and expanding academic enrichment activities (4.34) highlights students' desire for efficient systems and intellectually stimulating environments. According to Paolini (2015), institutional effectiveness was closely tied to the quality of academic services and the availability of enrichment opportunities that promote critical thinking and professional development. Faculty development programs and the strengthening of graduate student organizations, both rated at 4.50, further reinforce the importance of cultivating a vibrant academic community. These initiatives contributed to a culture of mentorship, collaboration, and leadership—key components of graduate student success as identified by Daniels (2014).

Support for research and innovation is particularly pronounced, with students advocating for expanded funding (4.57) and interdisciplinary collaboration (4.50). This reflects a broader trend in higher education toward integrative and inquiry-driven learning models. Llenaresas (2021) argued that robust research ecosystems not only enhance academic rigor but also prepare students for complex, real-world challenges. The emphasis on alumni engagement (4.39) suggested that students value long-term institutional relationships and mentorship networks that extend beyond graduation, a sentiment echoed by Schomburg (2010) in his work on employability and academic continuity.

Mental health services and digital transformation received the highest ratings (4.61 and 4.57, respectively), indicating that students view psychosocial support and technological modernization as critical to their academic experience. Almahasees et al. (2021) found that mental health resources and digital infrastructure were increasingly central to student satisfaction, especially in post-pandemic educational contexts. The top-rated item—support for institutional efforts to improve graduate education (4.61)—demonstrates a shared commitment to progress and a belief in the institution's capacity to evolve.

Graduate students advocate for a holistic approach to institutional enhancement—one that integrates academic quality, operational efficiency, research innovation, and student well-being. These priorities provide a clear roadmap for targeted improvements that align with contemporary educational standards and student expectations.

The data reveal two critical dimensions of graduate student experience that significantly influence academic satisfaction and performance: areas for instructional improvement and the impact of instructor approachability. While many students express satisfaction with current academic instruction, several participants identify specific areas where enhancements could elevate the learning experience. Instructional methods and practical application are among the most frequently cited concerns. Students advocate for more interactive, flexible, and real-world teaching strategies, reflecting a broader pedagogical shift toward experiential and student-centered learning. As Paolini (2015) emphasized, instructional effectiveness is maximized when teaching methods are engaging, relevant, and responsive to diverse learner needs. The call for integrating case studies, practical exercises, and modern approaches aligns with contemporary trends in graduate education that prioritize critical thinking and professional readiness.

Research support and academic guidance also emerge as key areas for improvement. Participants highlight the need for consistent mentorship, clearer feedback mechanisms, and stronger integration of research into the curriculum. Llenaresas (2021) underscored the importance of strategic interventions in research instruction, noting that structured support enhances scholarly output and student confidence. The emphasis on career preparation beyond academics further reflects the evolving expectations of graduate students, who seek holistic development that includes both academic rigor and professional competencies.

Facilities and learning spaces are another area of concern. Students point to inadequate classroom conditions, limited access to technology, and insufficient study areas as barriers to effective learning. Smith and Bath (2020) argued that the physical learning environment significantly impacts student engagement and satisfaction, and institutions must ensure that infrastructure supports both comfort and academic productivity. Additionally, calls for improved mental health support and administrative efficiency highlighted the need for comprehensive institutional services that address student well-being—a factor increasingly recognized as essential to academic success (Almahasees et al., 2021).

Conversely, instructor approachability and accessibility are overwhelmingly praised by participants. Students consistently describe their instructors as friendly, responsive, and supportive, both in and out of class. This accessibility fosters a sense of belonging, motivation, and academic confidence. Daniels (2014) noted that faculty who are approachable and empathetic contribute to a positive learning climate, which enhances student persistence and performance. The ability of instructors to accommodate personal and professional circumstances—such as shifting to

online formats or providing timely feedback—demonstrates a learner-centered approach that aligns with best practices in graduate education.

While graduate students appreciate the dedication and accessibility of their instructors, they also identify opportunities for improvement in instructional delivery, research support, facilities, and student services. Addressing these areas through strategic enhancements can lead to a more inclusive, responsive, and academically enriching graduate experience.

The personal challenges faced by graduate students—particularly financial instability, time management, stress, and logistical barriers—are deeply intertwined with their academic performance, well-being, and overall satisfaction. Financial strain was the most cited issue, with students reporting that tuition costs, transportation expenses, and limited access to resources disrupted their focus and attendance. This aligns with the findings of Müller et al. (2018), who emphasized that financial hardship is a major determinant of academic persistence and mental health in graduate education. The psychological toll of financial stress, including anxiety and self-doubt, was evident in several narratives, reinforcing the need for institutional financial support mechanisms.

Time management and scheduling conflicts were also prominent, as many students juggled full-time employment, family responsibilities, and academic demands. Hammer et al. (2015) argued that flexible academic structures are essential for adult learners, and the participants' coping strategies—such as prioritization, adjustment, and discipline—demonstrate resilience in the face of competing obligations. The challenge of commuting and distance from campus further compounded these pressures, suggesting that geographic accessibility and hybrid learning options could enhance student engagement and reduce attrition.

Stress and emotional strain were frequently mentioned, with students describing the difficulty of maintaining momentum, managing pressure, and balancing personal responsibilities. Mladenovici et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of mental health support and wellness services in graduate programs, noting that emotional resilience is key to academic success. Participants who overcame these challenges often credited supportive faculty, understanding peers, and the ability to seek help—echoing Paolini's (2015) assertion that approachable instructors fostered a nurturing and motivating learning environment.

Financial circumstances were shown to have a direct impact on students' ability to concentrate, complete research, and remain enrolled. While some students demonstrated remarkable perseverance, others expressed doubts about continuing their studies due to financial stress. The call for scholarships, grants, and broader financial assistance was echoed across responses, aligning with the recommendations of Llenaresas (2021), who advocated for strategic institutional interventions to support graduate students' academic and professional development.

Additional support services recommended by students include expanded mental health resources, career development programs, writing and research centers, and improved campus infrastructure. These suggestions reflect a holistic understanding of student needs, emphasizing that academic success is contingent upon emotional well-being, financial stability, and access to quality learning environments. Smith and Bath (2020) affirmed that well-equipped facilities and digital connectivity are essential components of a conducive academic experience.

Interestingly, several students expressed full satisfaction with their graduate program, indicating that institutional efforts in areas such as faculty engagement, instructional quality, and service delivery are being recognized and appreciated. This positive feedback suggests that while challenges persist, there is a strong foundation upon which further improvements can be built.

The study conducted at St. Louise de Marillac College of Sorsogon, Inc. reveals that graduate students report high levels of scholastic satisfaction, driven by faculty expertise, curriculum relevance, and institutional flexibility. Students value the alignment of academic instruction with career goals, the supportive mentorship they receive, and the conducive learning environment. However, challenges such as financial strain, limited research dissemination opportunities, and outdated facilities persist. In response to these findings, the institution proposes strategic enhancements—including expanded mental health services, improved digital infrastructure, and transparent feedback systems—to foster a more inclusive and responsive graduate education experience. Notably, the study also recommends the offering of a Doctor of Education (EdD) program major in Pedagogical Leadership and Instructional Methods, aimed at preparing scholar-practitioners to lead instructional reform, mentor educators, and design evidence-based teaching strategies that address diverse learner needs.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and interpretations, the researcher drew the following conclusions: Graduate students value faculty expertise, curriculum relevance, and research integration, but call for improvements in personalization, assessment diversity, and instructional interactivity; Faculty mentorship, flexible scheduling, and a supportive learning environment are key factors of graduate student satisfaction, though facility upgrades and better digital access remain needed.; A combination of strong faculty engagement, accessible resources, and institutional flexibility foster academic success and emotional well-being among graduate students.; Despite facing financial, academic, and emotional challenges, graduate students remain committed and resilient, underscoring the need for holistic institutional support.; Students strongly support strategic enhancements in mental health, digital infrastructure, and research funding, while advocating for more transparent and responsive feedback systems.

The following recommendations are proposed: (1) Enhance instructional delivery through personalized methods, varied assessments, and interactive formats to elevate the learning experience. (2) Invest in campus facilities and digital infrastructure while maintaining strong mentorship and flexible academic policies which strengthen student satisfaction. (3) Expand responsive faculty engagement and flexible learning options to support both academic achievement and emotional well-being. (4) Implement holistic support strategies that address financial aid, mentorship clarity, and emotional wellness which help students overcome interconnected challenges. (5) Prioritize transparent feedback systems and advance initiatives in mental health, research funding, and digital transformation that foster a more supportive and innovative academic environment.

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