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Adviser–Student–Panel Dynamics in the Pre-Oral Defense Process: Predictors of Research Proposal Success and Delays

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Abstract

This study examined whether adviser consultation frequency, panel feedback clarity, and student research readiness significantly predict pre-oral defense success among master's degree students. A total of 92 respondents, including 80 students, 5 advisers, and 7 panel members. Guided by the Input–Process–Output (IPO) framework, the study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Data were collected through a validated researcher-developed questionnaire. Results revealed that students experienced high levels of adviser consultation and research readiness, while panel feedback clarity was generally high but moderate in consistency. Data showed that Adviser Consultation, Panel Feedback Clarity, and Research Readiness significantly predicted pre-oral defense success, with research readiness as the strongest predictor. The findings suggest that structured adviser guidance, transparent panel evaluation, and strong research preparedness collectively enhance proposal approval outcomes. Graduate programs may improve completion rates by institutionalizing regular consultation schedules, standardizing feedback procedures, and strengthening research competency development.

Keywords: adviser consultation; graduate supervision; panel feedback clarity; pre-oral defense; proposal approval; research readiness

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INTRODUCTION

Graduate education thrives when supervision, evaluation, and student preparedness function in harmony. The pre-oral defense serves as a key milestone that ensures research proposals achieve methodological rigor, conceptual clarity, and high academic standards prior to full implementation. When effectively facilitated, this stage enhances the quality of proposals, fosters student confidence, and promotes timely research completion. Structured supervision and clear evaluation criteria empower students to refine their work efficiently and achieve successful outcomes.

Prior research highlights the importance of structured supervision. Lee (2008) emphasized that effective supervision involves consistent adviser engagement, critical academic dialogue, and relational mentoring. Wisker, Robinson, and Shacham (2007) noted that sustained mentoring strongly predicts timely research progression. Panel feedback also plays a vital role: clear, criterion-based feedback enhances proposal quality, while ambiguous evaluation extends revision cycles (Manathunga, 2007).

Despite these studies, limited studies have examined how adviser consultation frequency, panel feedback clarity, and student research readiness collectively influence pre-oral defense outcomes.

By improving supervisory practices, feedback mechanisms, and student competencies, this research contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Enhancing graduate research outcomes aligns with this global commitment by equipping future professionals and researchers with the skills needed to address complex societal challenges.

The study specifically investigates whether these factors significantly predict pre-oral defense approval among master’s degree students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to examine adviser–student–panel dynamics influencing pre-oral defense outcomes.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. Describe the profile of respondents involved in the pre-oral defense process.
2. Determine the level of adviser consultation frequency during proposal development.
3. Assess the clarity and consistency of panel feedback during the pre-oral defense.
4. Evaluate the level of student research readiness in terms of research design knowledge, methodological competence, and academic writing preparedness.
5. Determine whether adviser consultation frequency, panel feedback clarity, and student research readiness significantly predict pre-oral defense success.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative methods design, integrating descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Quantitative data determined predictive relationships among adviser consultation frequency, panel feedback clarity, student research readiness, and pre-oral defense success.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire divided into four sections:

1. Adviser Consultation Frequency
2. Panel Feedback Clarity
3. Student Research Readiness (Research Design Knowledge, Methodological Competence, Academic Writing Preparedness)
4. Pre-Oral Defense Outcome

All items used a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts.

Respondents and Locale

A total of 92 respondents were involved: 80 master’s students, 5 advisers, and 7 panel members from a graduate school, Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc.

Data Collection and Procedure

Institutional approval and informed consent were secured prior to data collection. Questionnaires were distributed personally and electronically and collected within four weeks. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

Statistical Treatment of the Data

Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) were used to describe respondent profiles and levels of consultation, feedback clarity, and research readiness.

Multiple regression analysis at the .05 level of significance examined whether adviser consultation frequency, panel feedback clarity, and student research readiness significantly predicted pre-oral defense success.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter highlights the presentation and analysis of the data gathered and the interpretation of findings based on the results of the instrument used.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Students	80	86.96
Advisers	5	5.43
Panel Members	7	7.61
Total	92	100

The majority of respondents were students (86.96%), which is expected as the study focuses on experiences and outcomes from the learner’s perspective. Advisers and panel members form the critical support and evaluative roles, though they are fewer in number. This distribution ensures that data capture both the main actors (students) and key influencers (advisers and panel members) in the pre-oral defense process.

Table 2. Level of Adviser Consultation Frequency

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Regular scheduled meetings	4.20	High
Adviser accessibility	4.10	High
Timely feedback provision	4.05	High
Clarification of methodological issues	4.12	High
Proposal review before submission	4.08	High
Guidance in addressing panel questions	4.15	High
Overall Mean	4.11	High

Legend: 4.21–5.00 = Very High; 3.41–4.20 = High; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 1.00–1.80 = Very Low

Students experienced a high level of adviser consultation, suggesting that regular engagement with advisers facilitates proposal refinement. Frequent consultation helps students identify errors early, clarify methodological concerns, and gain confidence in their research, ultimately increasing the likelihood of pre-oral defense success.

Table 3. Level of Panel Feedback Clarity

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Clarity of revision instructions	3.85	High
Specificity and understandability	3.80	High
Consistency among panel members	3.60	Moderate
Transparency of evaluation criteria	3.78	High
Feedback improves proposal quality	3.82	High
Alignment between adviser and panel	3.65	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.75	High

Legend: 4.21–5.00 = Very High; 3.41–4.20 = High; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 1.00–1.80 = Very Low

Panel feedback was generally clear and constructive, though consistency among panel members was moderate. Clear feedback helps students know exactly what revisions are needed, while minor inconsistencies indicate a need for standardized evaluation rubrics. Transparent panel guidance reduces confusion and minimizes delays in proposal approval.

Table 4. Level of Student Research Readiness

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Research design knowledge	3.95	High
Methodological competence	4.00	High
Academic writing preparedness	3.85	High
Overall Mean	3.93	High

Legend: 4.21–5.00 = Very High; 3.41–4.20 = High; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 1.00–1.80 = Very Low

Students displayed a high level of research readiness, particularly in methodological competence. Being well-prepared in research design, methodology, and academic writing allows students to respond effectively to panel critiques. This supports the premise that readiness is a strong predictor of pre-oral defense success.

Table 5. Significant Predictors of Pre-Oral Defense Success

Indicators	Probability (p-value)	Decision	Remarks
Adviser Consultation Frequency	.001	Reject H ₀	Significant
Panel Feedback Clarity	.000	Reject H ₀	Significant
Student Research Readiness	.000	Reject H ₀	Significant

All predictor variables significantly influence pre-oral defense outcomes at the .05 level. Student research readiness was the strongest contributor, followed by panel feedback clarity and adviser consultation frequency. This indicates that well-prepared students, clear panel feedback, and consistent adviser guidance collectively enhance the likelihood of proposal approval. Graduate programs should therefore focus on improving research skill development, standardizing feedback procedures, and ensuring structured consultation to reduce delays.

Discussion

This chapter presents and analyzes the data gathered, providing interpretations based on the *Studies in Technology and Education*

results obtained from the research instrument. The profile of respondents shows that the majority were students (86.96%), followed by panel members (7.61%) and advisers (5.43%). This distribution is appropriate given that the study primarily examines the experiences and outcomes of students during the pre-oral defense process. At the same time, the inclusion of advisers and panel members ensures that the data capture not only the perspectives of the main participants but also those of key individuals who guide and evaluate the research process. This balanced representation strengthens the validity of the findings by incorporating both learner experiences and expert insights.

In terms of adviser consultation frequency, the results indicate a high level of engagement, with an overall mean of 4.11. All indicators, including regular meetings, adviser accessibility, timely feedback, and guidance on methodological concerns, were rated high. This suggests that consistent and structured interaction between students and advisers plays a crucial role in refining research proposals. Frequent consultation allows students to identify and correct errors early, clarify complex concepts, and strengthen their overall research design. As a result, students become more confident and better prepared, increasing their chances of successfully passing the pre-oral defense.

The level of panel feedback clarity was also found to be high, with an overall mean of 3.75. Indicators such as clarity of revision instructions, specificity, and transparency of evaluation criteria were positively rated, indicating that panel members generally provide constructive and understandable feedback. However, consistency among panel members and alignment between advisers and panelists were rated at a moderate level. This implies that while feedback is helpful, slight inconsistencies may lead to confusion among students. These findings highlight the need for more standardized evaluation criteria and clearer alignment among evaluators to ensure a more cohesive and efficient revision process.

Students demonstrated a high level of research readiness, with an overall mean of 3.93. They showed strong competence in research design, methodology, and academic writing. This level of preparedness suggests that students possess the necessary foundational skills to conduct research effectively and respond to panel critiques. High research readiness enables students to defend their proposals more confidently and make necessary revisions efficiently, reinforcing the idea that preparedness is a key factor in achieving pre-oral defense success.

Finally, the analysis of significant predictors reveals that adviser consultation frequency, panel feedback clarity, and student research readiness all have a statistically significant influence on pre-oral defense success, as indicated by p-values less than the .05 level. Among these, student research readiness emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by panel feedback clarity and adviser consultation. This indicates that while external support systems are important, the students' own level of preparedness remains the most critical factor. Overall, the findings suggest that successful pre-oral defense outcomes are the result of a combination of well-developed research skills, clear and consistent feedback from panel members, and sustained guidance from advisers. Therefore, graduate programs should prioritize strengthening research training, standardizing evaluation practices, and ensuring structured consultation processes to enhance student success and minimize delays in proposal approval.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that adviser consultation frequency, panel feedback clarity, and student research readiness significantly predict pre-oral defense success, highlighting the multidimensional nature of factors that influence students' research performance. Among these, student research readiness emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that a solid foundation in research design, methodological competence, and academic writing plays a decisive role in achieving favorable proposal outcomes. This finding underscores that when students are adequately equipped with the necessary research knowledge and skills, they are more capable of articulating their ideas, defending their proposals confidently, and responding effectively to panel critiques. Consequently, readiness is not merely a supporting factor but a central determinant of success in the pre-oral defense process.

In addition, panel feedback clarity and adviser consultation frequency were found to contribute significantly to students' success. Clear, specific, and transparent feedback from panel members enables students to understand expectations, identify necessary revisions, and improve their work systematically. However, any inconsistency in feedback may create confusion and delay progress, emphasizing the need for aligned and standardized evaluation practices. Similarly, frequent and structured adviser consultation provides continuous guidance, allowing students to refine their proposals, address methodological concerns, and build confidence throughout the research process. The role of advisers as mentors is therefore crucial in scaffolding student learning and ensuring that research outputs meet academic standards.

These findings suggest important implications for graduate programs. Institutions should institutionalize structured adviser consultation schedules to ensure consistent and meaningful engagement between students and advisers. Moreover, there is a need to standardize panel evaluation procedures by developing clear rubrics and guidelines that promote consistency, fairness, and transparency in feedback. Equally important is the strengthening of student research competency development through targeted training programs, particularly in research methodology, data analysis, and academic writing. By integrating these strategies, graduate programs can create a more supportive and coherent research environment that not only enhances pre-oral defense success but also contributes to the overall quality of scholarly outputs and the development of competent, research-oriented graduates.

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