CHALLENGES FACED BY SUPERVISORS-SUPERVISEES DURING RESEARCH SUPERVISION AT AN EMERGING SOUTH AFRICAN RURAL UNIVERSITY: LIVED EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a study conducted at a university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The research explored challenges faced by supervisors-supervisees during the conduct of a formal research project. The study focused on the relationship between students and supervisors. A qualitative research case study was adopted to explore experiences of supervisors and supervisees at the purposively chosen institution under study. Narrative interviews and open-ended interviews were used as the core data collection tools from a sample of 8 research students and 4 lecturers from two faculties of the university under study. The findings of the study revealed that lack of communication, delay and poor feedback, lack of ethical considerations, non-availability of some supervisors, lack of commitment and ill-preparedness by students, were the key aspects that influenced the negative supervisory experiences of the students and supervisors who participated in the study. The study proffers recommendations and interventions that could be used by those in authority in the university under study, by supervisors, and by research students in order to improve and change the supervision experience. Amongst these are the adoption of Faculty Collaborative Research model, training of students and supervisors, and communication guidelines.

Keywords: Research supervision, Supervisor, Supervisee, Rural University, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Supervision literally means "to oversee". It is a collaborative process between the supervisor and the supervisee, and the effectiveness of supervision is highly dependent on the quality of relationship between the supervisor and supervisee (Collins and Laufer, 2017). Good supervision is essential to the success of the research students, but it is a poorly understood teaching-learning process by inexperienced supervisors in rural universities (Mapasela and Wilkinson, 2016). The supervision of both undergraduate and postgraduate studies is a challenge at universities worldwide, even under optimal conditions and where the research students study full-time (Andrew, 2014).

Among numerous factors, the success of student research study supervision is dependent on a proactive relationship between supervisors and supervisees, particularly when it comes to their cognitive abilities to grasp, plan, coordinate and consolidate their research project in a professional manner (Bitzer, 2011; Lessing, 2015). In addition, Chiappetta-Swanson and Watt

(2015) argue that the relationship between a research student and an academic supervisor is important to the success of the learning experience, to the sense of gratification of both participants, to the growth of research skills, and to the shaping of successful career course for both the student and the supervisor. The focus of this study was on exploring and describing the challenges faced by supervisors-supervisees during formal research projects, which hinder the success of research students in one of the rural universities in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Background of the Study
A number of studies have concentrated on the challenges that potentially limit the success of research students. Such studies have revealed that many research students drop out or do not complete their studies within the stipulated time (Naim and Dhanapal, 2015; Bitzer, 2011). At Florida State University in America, Hudson (2016) identifies many factors such as inadequate preparation of candidates, methodological difficulties, inexperienced or overburdened supervisors, poor planning and management, insufficient financial support for students, personal problems outside, poor relationship between student and supervisor, and overall ineffective infrastructural support for postgraduate studies, as accounting for poor supervision relationship.

Similar challenges are confirmed in Nairobi by Dimitrova (2016) who argues that students enter the postgraduate education environment with little or no sufficient knowledge of research or academic literacy, and have little prior knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in this regard. An understanding of both undergraduate and postgraduate students in research supervision may highlight some challenges perceived to be contributing to low throughput rates and poor quality products in South African universities (Chireshe, 2012). A study conducted by postgraduate students at the University of Fort Hare, Cekiso, Tshotsho, Masha and Saziwa (2019) revealed that, while there has been a number of studies that make a case for more effective postgraduate supervision and the need for student commitment and identity development, there has been little emphasis on the institution or the university and its role in the production of knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, this study concentrated on a young small growing rural university, where some of the lecturers were inexperienced in research supervision, did not have computer literacy and where research students did not have a sound research background.

Purpose of the study
The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges faced by supervisors-supervisees in conducting formal research projects, that compromised the success of research students in one of the rural universities in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Literature review
Supervisory relationships are difficult and dynamic, complex, lengthy, and may comprise conflict (Collins, 2015). Winberg (2014) reveals that students are different when it comes to behaviour, age, language, culture, socio-economic background and educational background. This diversity poses a threat and challenge for the supervisor-student process of supervision. Mouton (2017) argues that the problems encountered by students in research could be due to either inexperience of the student, poor supervision, or inefficient system. The other problem arises when the student expects a spoon-feeding package from the supervisor. In studies

conducted in central, eastern and southern Africa, Mutula (2016) found that the supervisor-supervisee relationship was affected by the delays in receiving feedback, lack of guidelines specifying the supervision process, poor supervision, no schedule for consultations, no archives of discussions held, no mechanisms for redress, supervisors continuously being too busy to have consultations with students, and heavy teaching loads for supervisors.

Bizter (2011) establishes that, for the supervisor, the more the students, there more the remuneration but the poorer the service, even within their own area of expertise and interest. In addition, Mouton (2017) argues that one of the most serious challenges that students may experience is the lack of library and information and communication technology resources to access the internet. Some of the commonest misunderstandings, especially between student and supervisor, is the lack of prior induction before the student embarks on a research. Without proper induction, it will come as a frustrating experience for a student to be told to write up things such as statement of the problem, research designs, and so forth (Hudson, 2016).

Methods
Approach
The qualitative approach was decided upon by the researchers since it is specifically suitable when the research takes place in a natural setting. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) note that the qualitative approach is concerned with understanding of human beings through their description of experiences as lived and defined by the actors themselves. Qualitative research plays a significant role in revealing the sensitive meaning of the lived experiences, the researchers investigated and explored supervisor – supervisee experience during their formal research project. Qualitative approach looks at the narrative and descriptive nature of situations, relationships or people, dealing with the description of human beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, perceptions, emotions (Babbie and Mouton, 2014). Additionally, qualitative approach is a valued means of gaining insight through establishing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Leedy and Ormrod, 2015). Hence, qualitative approach was employed in this research study because of the nature of the research phenomenon which required an in depth exploration of supervisor-supervisee experiences during a formal research supervision.

Design
The researchers employed the qualitative case study design. A case study is an exploration and comprehensive description of a phenomenon, group or individual case and its analysis, that is; the characterization of the case and the events, as well as a description of the discovery process of these features that is the process of research itself (Hugo, 2009). The case study design was adopted because the nature of the study was to explore and discover the feelings of students and supervisors regarding supervision, voices, perceptions and obligations of their research project supervision. The study was a case study of only one rural university in the Eastern Cape Province. Case studies allow a phenomenon under study to be studied in detail for in- depth understanding.

Sampling
The researchers conveniently and purposively used only the final year research students and lecturers who were in formal research mentoring relationship. The sampling technique that was employed was purposive sampling. The researchers employed purposive sampling because the

students that were participating in the study had a fully established relationship with their supervisors and also had a memory of the experience since they were working with their supervisors so, these participants had rich information the researchers were looking for. The researchers selected four research students from each faculty (two males and two females) and two lecturers who were supervisors of the research students from each faculty. The total number of participants from both faculties combined were twelve. The institution under study was selected using a purposive sampling technique and this is because the researchers knew that the participants existed in the institution and there was easy access and proximity for entry.

Data Collection Instruments

The narrative interviews and the open–ended interviews were the two instruments used to collect data from the sampled students and lecturers. Open-ended interviews and narrative interviews were not simultaneously used. Firstly, there were narrative interviews that focused on getting the general experience, belief and emotions, followed by open-ended interviews focused on getting in-depth details of the experience. The open-ended interviews followed up on factors that were emanating from the narratives. The open-ended interviews provided a great opportunity to capture rich, descriptive data about people's behaviours, motivations, beliefs and so forth. Due to Covid 19 and government's lockdown strict regulations, the participants were first contacted by telephone and the purpose of the study was made known to them before meeting them, and the researcher requested an appointment with them in the event they agreed to participant in the study.

The study adopted three approaches of collecting data namely; face-to-face interviews, email interviews and telephone interviews. These approaches were meant to cater for participants who wanted to participate in the study but did not want to meet with people face-to-face due to covid19 protocols. Student participants from both faculties did not have any issues meeting with the researchers for face-to-face interviews. Therefore, the researchers had face-to-face interviews with student participants and all covid19 protocols were observed. One supervisor also conducted face-to-face interviews with one of the researchers, while the other supervisor responded to email interviews. The rest of the supervisors opted for telephone interviews which were successful as well. The study began by narratives which placed the participants being interviewed at the heart of a research study and drew their confidence and emotions into the study and helped the researchers to better understand participants' feelings, experiences and behaviour. In addition, the researcher followed up with open-ended interviews to get the in-depth detail of the experiences of the participants. The study used these two methods to ensure that responses or data collected was reliable and valid.

Data Analysis

High volume of information was extracted from the narrative interviews and the open-ended interviews responses. The data was then analysed and categorised thematically to make sense of it. The researchers considered only the data that were responding to what the study was looking for.

Ethical Issues

The researchers observed the values and principles of anonymity, informed consent (signed agreement by the participants to participate in the study) confidentiality, honesty, voluntary participation and permission. In maintaining the aforementioned ethical principles,

participants' biographical details were hidden and not recorded during the interviews. The captured responses on records were transcribed and arranged thematically. The participants were assured that the records or transcripts shall not be shared to anyone. The details of the institution under study were not exposed nor identified in the research report. Since the researchers planned not to expose the participants to any form of psychological harm, the participants were assured of their rights to pull out from partaking from the study at any time should they wish to do so.

Findings
The research findings on narratives and interviews are presented following the themes that were identified and linked to each question. The responses from participants were analysed and interpreted in terms of the literature on exploring challenges faced by supervisor-supervisee during their formal research projects.

Students' experience and perspective through narrative interviews
Quite a number of similar narrative stories were expressed by students and how they thought things were in research supervision compared to what they actually encountered. Surprisingly, students narrated similar stories in relation to the experiences they encountered during their formal research supervision. The researchers drew from the narrative interviews responses of the participants to establish a balance on the data collected and findings.

During narrative interviews, students expressed their feelings with emotions some of the experiences they encountered with their supervisors. A very sensitive story was narrated by EDUSF1 and the brief story is as follows:

…during the early stages with my supervisor, I thought everything will go well as he is a trained person to supervise us as students. To my surprise, that was not the case. Instead, he was just not there. He did not give me any support or guidance. What he used to do was to ask me to submit chapter one and he would not provide any feedback. Instead, he would ask for chapter two when I ask him about any corrections on chapter one. To be honest, this was very painful to me because I felt like I'm not learning anything. In fact, I can tell you now, I really do not know what is research all about, and this is stressful to me because I want to further my studies and do Master's degree but I don't know if I will cope because I still lack research skills and thanks to that supervisor…

TECHSM2 also narrated a story on how he really got delayed in his studies by Faculty Research Committee and the supervisor who later left the institution. The following is the brief story shared by him:

I started my B. Com Honours in 2019 right after I completed my BTech and initially, B.com honours were a one-year programme and I intended to complete my honours in record time. In 2019, I was given Economics lecturer to supervise me and things never went any good between me and him. I used to submit my proposal to him and he would not get back to me. It would take months to get a reply from him. In fact, he even left the institution now and I still blame him because he delayed me severely in my research. Things became worse in 2020 because I had no supervisor and I reported this to the research coordinator who also didn't care about my issues. But I only received a supervisor late last year and I have submitted my work to him and he seemed to be a person who is interested in my work. Had I received all the

necessary support and guidance, I would have completed my honours but here in this institution there is just no care for us research students, particularly us in B.com honours. Where have you ever seen a class that will have one student graduating after 3 years in a programme that is said to be a one-year programme? This just what we are confronted with here…

Summary of narratives
Stories shared by students on how they were treated during their supervision relationships were really shocking and heart breaking. It appears that there was a lot going on between a student and supervisor in their supervision relationship. The fact that there were few graduates in one of the programmes offered in the FoET was a cause for concern. Moreover, the lack of support and guidance to students is something that cannot be ignored.

Supervisors' experience and perspective through narrative interviews
The narratives by lecturers contradicted the data shared through student narratives as reflected below. It was interesting to note that there was a blame game, on the one hand students blaming the supervisors, while on the other hand, supervisors bemoaned how supervisees were not co-operating. TECHL2 wrote:

The relationship with my student was just an up and down type of a relationship causing a big challenge. Sometimes my student would disappear for months and months, and when she comes back, she brings all the excuses that she has been having work challenges and she would expect me to understand that. I gave her a chance more than once to do her proposal and submit it but she would not do that or maybe when she submits she just brings half of a chapter. I felt as though we were not making any progress because on my side, I would make comments on her work and instruct her to make changes and I would make it a point that I give her feedback as quickly as I can but surprisingly it would take months for her to come back to me again.

Moreover, EDUL1 also narrated his experience with his students, and expressed his feelings on how his individual students treated their supervision relationship. He narrated that:

I had about 10 students that I was supervising, and all of them had different characters and behaviour. I got to understand their characters when I would have some arguments with them. I remember this other day I instructed one of them to rectify citation in her work. Instead of doing as I told her, she was very furious at me and she said, "But I have been doing this citation and you keep on saying I must change it, what is it exactly that you want from me sir". It was a very shocking moment for me but then later on I called her and explained how I wanted things to be done and we continued working together.

Summary of the narrative interviews
It appears that supervisors also had some encounters with their students. The negligence as identified by supervisors about students is a cause for concern. The fact that students would disappear for months without doing their research is a clear indication of lack of interest on the side of the students. Much needs to be done to change the conditions supervisors find themselves in. Also supervisees view supervisors as their source of delay and poor feedback. Interestingly, supervisees also accused supervisors for the lack of guidance and support, and claimed that supervisors did not communicate with them frequently. This may be the reason why students did not show much dedication towards their research. The blame game between

supervisors and students requires more attention because for as long as it exists, the challenges related to supervision will continue to prevail. A lot more needs to be done.

Students' perspective and experiences through open-ended interviews
Data collected through supervisee interviews corroborated data gathered through supervisee narratives and was refuted by the data collected from the supervisors.

Challenges faced by Supervisor-Supervisee during formal research projects
What are the challenges faced by Supervisor-Supervisee during formal research projects?

Understanding the types of challenges faced by students in their research paper, how they affect their academic work and modes of communication
The collected data from narratives as reported by EDUSF1 revealed that there was lack of feedback and inadequate guidance and support. Similarly, EDUM3 reported similar sentiments during interviews and complained that many of their supervisors lacked communication and did not give feedback on time. EDUM3 stated that:

It's the challenge of him not responding on time with the feedback. And he would respond at inconvenient time for us, for me sometimes, because you know my life doesn't revolve only around my research. You cannot come to me at 22:00PM while my mother is battling with an illness and I have to take care of her and then he comes at those late hours and tell us to submit, and if you submit the following morning, he has already moved on from what we were doing, and he doesn't understand but he is expecting us to understand when he is busy. So, that was my challenge with him.

Similarly, EDUSM3 from the FoE reported that he had a challenge in the manner in which his work was being corrected by his supervisor. The participant said:

The main challenge mostly that I encountered when it comes to my supervisor correcting me from what I was supposed to do versus the document she sent me was for example, where you would have research guidelines that are typed and approved by the University of saying this is the approach but the challenge it contradicts what the supervisor would advise me to actually do which causes an issue. The second one was that of time and consistency in giving feedback. Where it would take too much time to get feedback, when you have sent your research to be corrected and even though as a student you are given your research back for correction, the supervisor will only give us maybe 2 days to finish the corrections, with something that you don't understand, so that was another challenge.

TECHSF2 in the FoET reported that they got inadequate support from their supervisors and grumbled that supervisors do not possess enough skills to do their work, hence; they encounter challenges even when it comes to choosing a topic. The student stated that:

We lack research skills, and the time allocated for our research is too short for us, considering the fact that I'm also working no matter how the supervisor attempts to apply tolerance time becomes a challenge and one may not complete on time. This is a challenge.

The participants in the FoE revealed how their relationships got affected due to the challenges they encountered. EDUSM4 revealed that:

Obviously, it created tension between us because most of the time I would have to argue for my space. I would have to argue to be given more chance. The relationship was bitter-sweet sometimes because we started at where we would have conflict and my approach on how things are happening. But I then got to understand because of the responsibility she has, first she is the HOD, she deals with meetings. Again, she doesn't only supervise undergrads but also even other postgrads. So, I got to understand that. Now, we were able to fix our communication channel. So, it started as bitter but in the process it got better.

When it comes to communication, it appears that for almost all research students in both faculties, their main communication platform was through WhatsApp followed by emails. However, EDUSM3 revealed that:

The strategy as we started the research was to exhaust every communication channel, so we were able to use WhatsApp and emails to submit. We used phone calls, but we sometimes used telegram and zoom for open sessions and classes because due to covid19, we could not meet on campus, so we used Zoom and the e-learning platform for other classes. That was the strategy, and it was successful.

While most participants in both faculties indicated their communication tools, some participants revealed that their supervisors were not providing any communication, support, or guidance. EDUSF1 from FoE said:

I would say that firstly, there was no communication between us. Secondly, he would not give us time to talk to him even if I call him his phone was always on voicemail. Even in terms of guidance, he was not guiding us. So, guidance was not there.

TECHSM2 in the FoET echoed similar sentiments and expressed his unhappiness on how he was treated by his supervisor. The following evidence is received from the student:

First, it was time management from both of us, myself and him. Secondly, it was deliberate miscommunication. My supervisor would not communicate with me directly instead he would communicate with my colleague I was doing research with and instruct her to pass the message to me, yet he had my contact details and when I call him, he would give me attitude. Thirdly, it was favouritism. My supervisor had his favourites and he would show that to me and he would not give me enough time. Our relationship was affected very badly. I say even today that I could have done a lot better in my research if I had another supervisor other than him.

SUMMARY

In summary it appears that the major challenge that research students in both faculties encountered was lack of communication between them and their supervisors. Moreover, lack of consistency, poor guidance, lack of support and delay in providing feedback, and little time given to research students to do corrections were challenges that affected the supervisor - supervisee relationship. Supervisors believed that students lacked preparedness, misunderstood

research, and lacked programs to support students. Moreover, supervisors claimed that students lacked dedication and commitment to their work. It appears to us that both students and supervisors accused each other, which was a cause for concern.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this research indicated that supervisors and students experienced an enormous range of challenges connected to research supervision. This is supported by Mutula (1999) and Grant (2003) who discovered that research supervision at postgraduate level is a practice multitude with a diversity of complications and challenges that are mostly evident in students' research outputs.

Lack of Skills

On the side of students, it emerged that they did not have skills and ability to make presentations, which caused failure to present original work. This is partially because of the lack of research skills, tools, methods, courses and insufficient supervision. Moreover, it was indicated that supervisors did not have adequate skills to allow them to successfully perform their supervision responsibilities. There was lack of research proficiency, inexperienced supervisors, and supervisors had a lot of work on their hands. This caused little research throughput, absence of appropriate monitoring and general carelessness in the manner in which research was conducted. The findings are in line with Mouton's (2017) assertion that the problems encountered by students in research could be due to either inexperience of the student, poor supervision, lack of skills by a supervisor or an inefficient system. However, Mutula (1999) points out that, in order to avoid conflicts and inadequate supervision between a lecturer and the student, there should be training, drilling, capacitating of both the supervisor and the student, provision of research methods and tools, of which from the findings of this study it was not the case.

Lack of communication and commitment

The study also discovered that the supervisors' and students' expectations were most of the times at variation, largely because they were not appropriately defined, which subsequently had effects on the value of research throughput. Mpofu and Chimhenga (2017) assert that effective communication between students and their supervisors is an imperative component of supervision. They contend that without friendly, open, honest and genuine communication, it is not easy to identify the root cause of problems encountered by either student or supervisor. However, findings of this study showed that some supervisors were unfriendly, unsupportive and unwilling to open dialogue with their students. This had a negative impact on the studies of the students. There is a necessity, for both the supervisors and the students to be dedicated and demonstrate a significant amount of self-motivation if they are to prosper in their work.

Moreover, there were allegations between supervisors and students, for instance, supervisors claimed that students were ill-prepared to undertake research and lacked commitment, while students accused supervisors of lacking expertise, consistency and sound feedback. While training is another aspect that required commitment and attention, good supervision can also be improved through collaboration and teamwork. This kind of collaboration may perhaps, institute congruence between goals and expectations of the research process.

These results had two implications. First, lack of preparedness in carrying out the research restricted intellectual growth of the students and their capacity to be proactive in constructing their own knowledgebase. Second, these findings were in line with previous studies for instance, Mutula's (2009) observation that lack of research proficiency at undergraduate level frequently led to poor research outputs. Abiddin (2016) notes that decent interaction between students and their supervisors was an imperative component of supervision.

Delay in providing feedback

The findings of the study revealed that students experienced challenges such as delay in feedback from their supervisors. Students also indicated that poor feedback from their supervisors was one of the most dominant factors in their relationships with supervisors. The most prominent factors that students mentioned were that supervisors did not provide feedback frequently, provided unhelpful feedback, and at times, provided diverse feedback for the same content. The other reason was that the supervisors took too much time to give students feedback. Such lack of devotion, support or interest by supervisors in the progress of students was demotivating. These findings were contrary to the views of Calma (2017) who asserts that supervisors should give their students feedback, time, guidance, dedication, and apportioned working space. In this study, it was not the case. Poor feedback has been emphasized by Lessing (2015) who revealed that students are unsatisfied about delayed and poor feedback. Similarly, a study by Wadesango and Machingambi (2014) noted that a significant proportion of their participants were unsatisfied with their supervisors' feedback in relation to their research work, especially when supervisors resent their work without any comments.

Different approaches in tacking supervision by supervisors

The findings of the current study revealed that supervisors tackled research supervision in different ways and were mindful of their strengths and weakness. Moreover, they acknowledged the multifaceted and dynamic relations between the students and supervisors, which need to be nurtured. Nonetheless, it can be presumed that not all supervisors were totally ineffectual, as it seemed on the surface. The gap and skills identified by students and supervisors needed swift attention in order to develop research supervision quality. Kincheloe (2016) cautions against taking research supervision for granted.

Despite assertions made by supervisors that they motivated students to reason individually when taking decisions, they did not explain how they put their ideas into practice. For instance, supervisors constantly portrayed their role as supportive; and provision of guidance, mentoring, coaching; and creating an environment that is favourable to learning. Although it can be said that this role to supervision is rather helpful, it confines students' academic flexibility and independence. Students stated that their supervisors were unfriendly and unsupportive to their work. Supervisors embraced a more directive role which had the potential of suppressing the intellectual and personal growth of students. This type of approach did not provide the student the freedom to be an independent researcher. Instead, it provided the supervisor the dominant role of taking decisions on behalf of the student, which conflicted with the democratic learning approach. This contrasts with the view by Collins (2017) and Pearson and Chireshe (2012) that research supervision is an on-going process that warrants students to own their research. Abiddin (2016) says for any supervision to be effective, there should be continuous professional support and guidance by a supervisor. The role of the supervisor is to assess and

indicate where corrections are needed from the work of a student and provide clear instructions without attempting to predominantly influence the work of the student (Lessing, 2015). The

findings in this study are contrary to the views of Abddin (2016) and Lessing (2015) as supervisors did not provide professional support and guidance but attempted to dominantly take decisions on behalf of the supervisees.

The discussions revealed quite a number of challenges that affected both the students and supervisors. However, it appears from the discussion, that the most affected people were students. Moreover, there seem to be lack of commitment, lack of communication, poor guidance and support, and delays in providing feedback. Based on the discussion, it is evident that these challenges had a direct effect on the number of research students produced, and the quality of the research itself.

CONCLUSION

Supervisor-student relationship is imperative to the quality and achievement of the learning experience. Frequently, the student's academic improvement is determined by the nature of such a relationship and hence the supervisor's capacity to nurture the relationship is imperative. The main purpose of this study was to explore the challenges faced by supervisors and supervisees during a formal research supervision process. The findings of the study revealed that, both the managerial and contextual components in supervision were not supportive of the research students' learning. This needs attention since both supervisor and the student play a vital role in the academic success of the student. The results also paint a miserable picture of how the communication process between supervisors and students was. Studies on research supervision submit that active communication is a vital part of the supervision process. However, the results revealed that there was lack of communication experienced by students in the supervision relationship. This was evident from delayed or poor feedback that students said was discouraging. It also emerged that the supervisor-student relationship was characterised by frustration and stress on the part of the students, and that inadequate feedback and poor support appeared as a poor supervisory guidance. The results of the study further showed poor ethical considerations by few supervisors who revealed sensitive information of the students they supervise. This needs attention because effective relationship among students and supervisors should be characterised by trust; it is like the relationship between the doctor and his patients. Therefore, it is important that trust in the relationship becomes the most dominant fact.

Future study

This research study has numerous limits that necessitate future research. Firstly, due to the fact that this research was conducted only in a single institution of higher education, future study can concentrate on students from various institutions and their perspective and experiences of research supervision. Secondly, the researchers believe that further studies are important for investigating the experiences of research supervisors in various institutions of higher learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Faculty Collaborative Research Model
The researchers recommends that the faculties need to introduce a Faculty Collaborative Research Model so that students who are doing research are exposed to a large number of supervisors with various skills. From the findings of the study, this model is mostly going to reduce the trauma, frustration and anxiety that the students are currently confronted with. The

model is most likely to support the inexperienced supervisors to get knowledge from experienced supervisors on how to conduct research supervision and maintain a conducive atmosphere for learning so as to improve graduate output rate. Moreover, a Faculty Collaborative Research model implementation could most likely provide opportunity for research students to work as groups for purposes of sharing ideas, methods and strategies. In that manner, students can learn from each other without overly depending on the supervisor. This model does not only help students but also supervisors to co-operatively discuss the progress of students, and it makes it easier for supervisors to identify and classify common challenges experienced by research students and plan to provide necessary support. This model would also be helpful in developing both novice and experienced supervisors to engage in learning communities. In this model, supervisors can jointly deliberate on the progress of the research students and categorize common challenges experienced by students. This can help put in place measures that can be used to address poor or negligent supervision.

Communication
In order to significantly improve the experiences of student supervision identified above, there must be an improved and better approach in one-on-one communication. The researchers recommend that clear communication guidelines be established and reflected on the research policy document. This will assist both supervisors and research students to clearly understand the communication tools and procedures. The aim is to avoid the existing poor communication identified by students. A pool of communication tools such as Emails, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Telegram, Face-to-Face meetings, phone calls should be put to use and someone must be assigned to properly monitor and evaluate whether the communication tools are being used by supervisors and students effectively.

Platform for Progress and Complaints
Based on the findings, a clear platform/office where students and supervisors report both their progress and any mistreatment that can possibly occur should be established. The researchers recommend the Faculty Manager to be the centre person who should receive complaints and any mistreatment as well as progress of research supervision. Supervisors need to create more space and time for consultations, establish clear research guidelines and feedback, and hold compulsory workshops for research students and supervisors.

Training of Supervisors, Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities
Seminars to train supervisors are more likely to mend and effectively improve the supervisor-student relationship. Precisely, the training, drilling and mentoring of novice supervisors by more skilled supervisors so as to improve the research output and the quality of research is necessary. In addition, the seminars should clearly define and explain responsibilities and roles for both research students and supervisors, so that both participants can be accountable. To ensure compliance to ethical issues, both students and supervisors must sign an agreement

document that clearly articulates the research related ethics issues. Proper working relations between supervisors and their supervisees should display compassion and work collaboratively. Supervisors should show real leadership skills and avoid being excessively critical and biased, as this can constrain students from formulating their own writing style. New supervisors need more experienced supervisors to collaborate with, so that they can share experiences of supervision and get total advice and encouragement.

Faculty Assistant Research Centre and Collaboration with other institutions
There should be an establishment of faculty assistant research centres close to the students assigned with the responsibility of supporting research students. All institutions of higher learning within the province should support one another and conduct continuous training as well as workshops. Collaboration with other well-resourced institutions across the country for purposes of benchmarking and evaluating how they run their research programmes would be of benefit.

Students' commitment to their work
It is important for students to take responsibility and ownership of their work. Most of the time, students are quick to declare that they do not understand what is expected of them without even putting extra effort on their work. This tendency needs to be changed. In order to change that kind of attitude, lecturers need to be willing to motivate and encourage students to discover information on their own and not be judgmental when they make mistakes. Once the student has gone an extra mile to do a piece of work that the lecturer was not aware of, the supervisor should correct the student in a polite way that is not demotivating or discouraging to the student. Often, students get demotivated and discouraged when they receive continuous negative comments hence the approach on how comments are made by supervisors needs to change in order to stimulate and encourage students to be independent.

Collaboration among research students and their peers, supervisors and the wider institution support services needs to be strengthened. Frequent interaction and engagement with various students from different faculties is also necessary to avoid isolation. There should be integration of researchers throughout the university community in order to promote collaboration. Training programmes, seminars, academic meetings and development of skills may be achieved through collaboration of researchers in various institutions.

Supervision Meetings
With regard to consultation sessions, supervisors need to be available for frequent meetings with research students to engage them and provide constructive and timely feedback. Frequent contact can help minimise the feeling of demotivation and discouragement. In an event where the supervisor is unavailable for a certain period of time, other supervisory provisions should be made available. Peer supervisory contact sessions, where research students can meet, discuss and learn from one another, need to be arranged and agreed upon by both research students and the supervisors.

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