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An Inquiry into Experiences of Supervisors and Supervisees in Conducting Research Supervision in Higher Education Institutions in Eswatini

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ABSTRACT

The importance of research in institutions of higher education stretches beyond enabling the student to gain a qualification. Students' research outputs should contribute to the body of knowledge, hence the need for quality research supervision in institutions. This study thus explored the experiences of supervisors and supervisees in research supervision. An interpretivist research paradigm and a qualitative research approach were used. Data was collected from purposively sampled participants using interviews and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that the supervisor's role is to guide and support the student step by step throughout the whole research process beginning from problem identification up to data collection and compilation of the final research report. The student's role is to take full responsibility for their own research from start to finish. Findings showed that supervisors were frustrated by students who lacked basic research knowledge and students who plagiarised previous studies. Students were frustrated by incompetent supervisors who abused their powers and forced them to change topics to accommodate their shortcomings, delayed with feedback and unconstructive feedback. The study recommended that institutions should engage qualified and competent research supervisors, train supervisors and supervisees and review their research policies and incorporate modern research trends, support students with resources to conduct research and publish their research outputs, and supervisors should embrace modern technology in research supervision.

Keywords: Experiences, Supervisors, Supervisees, Research

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INTRODUCTION

In institutions of higher education research is conducted as partial fulfilment of pursued qualifications.The essence of research however is to contribute to the body of knowledge.Ngulube states that in higher education supervisory practices are vital to the production of quality research, but these practices are poorly understood.[1] Ngulube stresses that institutions need to understand supervisory practices pedagogies to strengthen their importance in knowledge production and the development of a knowledge society. Fullwood, Rowley, and McLean view knowledge production as fundamental to the creation of a knowledge society in support of knowledge-based economies.[2]The South African National Development Plan: Vision for 2030 calls for the contribution of postgraduate education to the knowledge society and

[1]Patrick Ngulube, "Postgraduate Supervision Practices in Education Research and the Creation of Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing," *Problems of Education in the 21st Century* 79, no. 2 (2021): 255–72.
[2]Roger Fullwood, Jennifer Rowley, and Jacqueline McLean, "Exploring the Factors That Influence Knowledge Sharing between Academics," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 43, no. 8 (2019): 1051–63.

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knowledge-based economies to respond to local and global challenges. The plan emphasises the importance of increasing the number of postgraduate students in higher education to improve research productivity and respond to the needs of the knowledge economy and the country's development.

Ngulube asserts that research students depend on the support of their supervisors to produce quality knowledge.[3]Mafa and Mapolisa argue that most students tend to undertake research for the sake of passing their courses.[4] Quality is compromised as they engage in unethical research practices such as reproducing other scholars' work and presenting them as their own. This results in research outputs devoid of new knowledge. Mafa and Mapolisa further note that some supervisors due to their methodological shortcomings tend to be biased toward one research paradigm at the expense of the students' paradigms.[5]Bahtilla raises concerns that some students face challenges and setbacks that result in stress and depression when supervisors force them to change the research topics that they are passionate about.[6]Mahlangu views the lack of supervision skillsas a challenge in the supervision of postgraduate students.[7]Zaheer and Munir note that time constraints, irregular contacts, and technological issues create communication barriers between students and supervisors.[8] Qureshi and Vazir argue that formal training in research supervision is not included in any standard teacher training curriculum.[9] This leads supervisors to depend on their own experiences of how they were supervised as graduate students. Supervisors end up using their own unstandardised research supervision models.

Ngakane and Madlela state that in Eswatini institutions of higher learning, students are allocated research supervisors in their final year of study.[10] The study explored the experiences of supervisors and supervisees during research supervision in higher education institutions in Eswatini. In contrast,Mafa and Mapolisa's study explored supervisors' experiences in supervising postgraduate education research students at Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU).[11]Qureshi and Vazir argue that what supervisors and supervisees go through during research supervision is not usually brought to light.[12] Though Mafa and Mapolisa focused on the supervisors' side, the side of the supervisees was not addressed. The Academy of Science of South Africa argues that few studies have focused on students' experiences of postgraduate supervision,[13] while Mahmud and Bretag point out that the voice of postgraduate students on research supervision has not received the attention it deserves.[14] Yousefi, Bazrafkan, and Yamani state that there is a need for empirical inquiry into the views of students.[15] As primary consumers of education, students are uniquely positioned to understand the nature of their academic problems better. Their perceptions and experiences are necessary in the formulation of solutions.Since the research journey is undertaken by both the supervisor and the supervisee,thisstudy exploresthe experiences of both. The exploration uncovered experiences, limitations and challenges encountered by supervisors and supervisees as they jointly navigated through a systematic research journey laden with complex processes. Strategies for improved research supervision and outputs were generated.

[3]Ngulube, "Postgraduate Supervision Practices in Education Research and the Creation of Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing."
[4]Onias Mafa and Tichaona Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)," *International Journal of Asian Social Science* 2, no. 10 (2011): 1685–97.
[5]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[6]Marinette Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China," *International Journal of Doctoral Studies* 17 (2022): 181–99.
[7]Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu, "Exploring Challenges of Supervising Postgraduate Students in Open Distance Learning in Higher Education Settings.," *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society,* 2021.
[8]Muhammad Zaheer and Saba Munir, "Research Supervision in Distance Learning: Issues and Challenges," *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal* 15, no. 1 (2020): 131–43.
[9]Rashida Qureshi and Vazir Neelofar, "Pedagogy of Research Supervision Pedagogy: A Constructivist Model ," *Research in Pedagogy* 6, no. 2 (2016): 95–110.
[10]B. Ngakane and B Madlela, "Effectiveness and Policy Implications of Using WhatsApp to Supervise Research Projects in Open Distance Learning Teacher Training Institutions in Swaziland," *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2022): 1–10.
[11]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[12]Qureshi and Neelofar, "Pedagogy of Research Supervision Pedagogy: A Constructivist Model ."
[13]Academy of Science of South Africa, "The PhD Study: An Evidence-Based Study on How to Meet the Demands for High-Level Skills in an Emerging Economy," 2010.
[14]Saadia Mahmud and Tracey Bretag, "Integrity in Postgraduate Research: The Student Voice," *Science and Engineering Ethics* 21 (2015): 1657–72.
[15]Alireza Yousefi, Leila Bazrafkan, and Nikoo Yamani, "A Qualitative Inquiry into the Challenges and Complexities of Research Supervision: Viewpoints of Postgraduate Students and Faculty Members," *Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism* 3, no. 3 (2015): 91.

To address the identified research problem, the following questions have been developed:

1. What are the roles of supervisors and supervisees in research supervision?
2. What are the experiences of supervisors and supervisees during the research supervision process?
3. Which strategies can be employed to improve research supervision?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ngakane and Madlela define research supervision as mentoring, supporting and guiding young researchers step by step throughout the research journey.[16] The supervisor assists the supervisee in identifying the problem, formulating researchable topics and research questions, reviewing literature, writing methodology, analysing data and compilingthe final report. Supervisors journey with their students and share experiences from the first day of supervision up to the completion of the research project.[17]Yousuf, Mushtahid, Salam, Islam and Salam state that research supervision is a process of providing professional guidance and monitoring the student throughout the research journey to produce research of higher quality.[18] Garwe and Mugari view research supervision as an intricate process that blends professional and academic expertise with interpersonal relationship management that needs regular adjustment and sensitivity, since the two parties involved may have both convergent and divergent interests.[19]

Roles of Supervisors

A research supervisor guides the student in research using institutional guidelines to ensure the development of research skills and mastery of the research discipline.[20] The University of Pretoria – UP spells out that the overarching responsibility of the research supervisor is to assist students in building knowledge and research skills that make it possible for them to start developing a publication record.[21] The supervisor introduces the student to relevant academic and professional networks through research seminars and conferences. Effective supervisors should encourage their supervisees to go to conferences and publish papers in journals.[22]

The research supervisor oversees the entire research project and provides feedback and emotional support to the student throughout.[23] Most students expect their supervisors to be competent,reasonably supportive of their work, and accessible whenever they need feedback on their research writing (Sidhu, et al., 2014). Feedback is a fundamental component of learning that should be given promptly.[24] Supervisors should have concern for students and their progress and provide constructive and timely feedback.[25]

UJ states that the supervisor should regularly discuss the process and outcomes of research with the student.[26]During regular engagements, the supervisor can give guidance and clarify the respective roles of the supervisor, co-supervisor and the student. Students value and trust a supervisor who is approachable and supportive of their work.[27] The supervisor should direct the student to the university's emotional wellness support, and necessary research resources, like the library and laboratories. It is the

[16]Ngakane and Madlela, "Effectiveness and Policy Implications of Using WhatsApp to Supervise Research Projects in Open Distance Learning Teacher Training Institutions in Swaziland."
[17]Ngakane and Madlela, "Effectiveness and Policy Implications of Using WhatsApp to Supervise Research Projects in Open Distance Learning Teacher Training Institutions in Swaziland."
[18]Rabeya Yousuf et al., "Research Supervision: Issues and Perspectives for Its Success," *International Medical Journal* 26, no. 4 (2019): 335–37.
[19]Evelyn Chiyevo Garwe and Godfrey Mugari, "The Quality of MBA Research Supervision in Zimbabwean Universities," *Global Journal of Educational Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 110–26.
[20]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy" (University of Johannesburg, 2021); Elishiba Njambi Kimani, "Challenges in Quality Control for Postgraduate Supervision," *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 1, no. 9 (2014): 63–70.
[21]University of Pretoria – UP, " Guidelines for Supervision" (University of Pretoria, 2012).
[22]Gurnam Kaur Sidhu et al., "Postgraduate Supervision: Comparing Student Perspectives from Malaysia and the United Kingdom," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 123 (2014): 151–59.
[23] Mary P Clynes and Sara E C Raftery, "Feedback: An Essential Element of Student Learning in Clinical Practice," *Nurse Education in Practice* 8, no. 6 (2008): 405–11.
[24] Clynes and Raftery, "Feedback: An Essential Element of Student Learning in Clinical Practice."
[25]University of Pretoria – UP, " Guidelines for Supervision."
[26]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[27]Kimani, "Challenges in Quality Control for Postgraduate Supervision."

supervisor's role to ensure that the student adheres to research ethics guidelines regarding academic integrity and plagiarism etc.[28]

Roles of Supervisees

In Lessing's study, 88% of respondents viewed the selection of the research problem as the role of the student, and 78% of respondents viewed the selection of an appropriate theoretical framework as the student's role too.[29]Yousuf et al., express that the supervisee needs to identify the research topic and do a preliminary reading to place the research in the context of literature and originality.[30]Yousuf et al. and UP state that students should create mutual relationships with their supervisors and peers, network and enhance communication.[31]

UJ states that at the beginning of the research journey, the student and supervisor should develop a plan and sign a student-supervisor agreement contract, and ensure that they are both aware of their rights and responsibilities and university policies and regulations related to research.[32]UJ further states that it is the student's role to read and understand the supervisor's feedback and incorporate it into their study.[33] They should find appropriate sources for literature, prepare required documents for ethical clearance under the supervisor's guidance, and also engage in required fieldwork, data collection, laboratory experimentation, data processing, and analyses.

The students should attend research workshops and conferences to enhance their professional growth students should network with other researchers, write and present conference papers, and publish in journals and conference proceedings. The student should always adhere to academic ethics regarding academic integrity and plagiarism. The student should use the university resources for support, and also use appropriate structures, processes and mechanisms for resolving potential areas of conflict.[34]

Experiences of Research Supervisors

Mafa and Mapolisa's study reveals that some supervisors enjoyed supervising enthusiastic postgraduate students who came up with new knowledge.[35] They argue that seeing students develop and achieve professional laurels and observing a student growing into an independent researcheris satisfying. Supervisors, however, pointed out that their experiences showed that most students had challenges and limitations in reviewing literature and coming up with a properand researchable topic.[36]Most research students do not have strong backgrounds inacademic writing. Poor academic literacy is revealed when students have to work independently on research projects.[37]

Mafa and Mapolisa reveal that most students have limitations in developing research proposals.[38] They do not know what to include in the study's background, how to critically review literature and identify the gap that their studies intend to address. They also have limitations in formulating research questions and interpretation of findings. Most students normally adopt surface analysis and have difficulties in cross-referencing using a theoretical and conceptual framework and reviewed literature to analyse their findings.[39] Supervisors are allocated students who are at different levels of research proficiency because,and in some universities at the undergraduate level, students do not do research. This

[28]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[29]A C Lessing, "The Role of the Supervisor in the Supervisory Process," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 25, no. 5 (2011): 921–36.
[30]Yousuf et al., "Research Supervision: Issues and Perspectives for Its Success."
[31]Yousuf et al., "Research Supervision: Issues and Perspectives for Its Success"; University of Pretoria – UP, " Guidelines for Supervision."
[32]University of Pretoria – UP, " Guidelines for Supervision."
[33]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[34]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[35]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[36]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[37]A Mhlahlo, "Reflecting on Supervision Experiences: Honours Students' Research Projects in Development Studies at the Nelson Mandela University," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 34, no. 2 (2020): 164–76.
[38]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[39]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."

forces supervisors to go back to the basics of research like what research is, types of research and research methodologies.[40]This consumes the already limited supervision time.

In Al-Muallem's study supervisors reflected that keeping to allocated research timelines was a challenge.[41]Other supervisors blamed students for poor time management skills and their attitudes toward leaving tasks to the very last minute.[42]Due to poor time management, in the end, students produce shoddy work or fail to meet submission deadlines. Some students end up reproducing, previous research studies from the internet.[43]Al-Muallem states that the lack of training of some supervisors makes them struggle with the research supervision process. [44]

Experiences of Supervisees

Cekiso, Tshotsho, Masha and Saziwa assert that postgraduate research students sometimes experience challenges that make it difficult to finish their studies in time.[45] Such challenges include a lack of financial support, poor supervision quality, delayed feedback, and ineffective institutional research and monitoring systems.[46]Cekiso et al argue that if feedback is delayed it becomes difficult for students to be motivated to work on the supervisor's comments.[47]In Chireshe's study students complained that supervisors were too busy to be effective.[48] They stated that they received too little feedback, and supervisors tended to give feedback which conflicted with previous feedback. Some students noted that there was tension and conflicting perspectives within the supervisory role, disagreements and poor communication.[49]

Wadesango and Machingambi's postgraduate research experiences studyfound that 75% of student respondents were not satisfied with their supervisors' feedback.[50] Naim and Dhanapal view Poor feedback by supervisors as a cause for concern because students demonstrate higher levels of intrinsic motivation when they are given informative feedback.[51] Chireshe and Yousefi; Bazrafkan and Yamani argue that poor communication between the supervisor and the student has been identified as negatively affecting the progress of research supervision.[52] In Bahtilla's study, most students said that they did not meet with their supervisors as often as they wanted, and that affected their research progress.[53] Some supervisors are too busy with teaching and administrative duties, and they do not have time to meet with their supervisees to discuss research.[54]

Students said that they were frustrated by supervisors who forced them to change topics. Some students expressed that forcing them to change their research topics is like indirectly telling them to leave the programme.[55]Forcing students to carry out research in areas that are not of their interest may depress

[40]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[41]Amani Al-Muallem, " Research Supervision: Faculty Perspectives" (2016).
[42]Al-Muallem, " Research Supervision: Faculty Perspectives."
[43]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[44]Al-Muallem, " Research Supervision: Faculty Perspectives."
[45]Madoda Cekiso et al., "Supervision Experiences of Postgraduate Research Students at One South African Higher Education Institution," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 33, no. 3 (2019): 8–25.
[46]E M Bitzer, "Doctoral Success as Ongoing Quality Business: A Possible Conceptual Framework," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 25, no. 3 (2011): 425–43.
[47]Cekiso et al., "Supervision Experiences of Postgraduate Research Students at One South African Higher Education Institution."
[48]Regis Chireshe, "Research Supervision: Postgraduate Students' Experiences in South Africa," *Journal of Social Sciences* 31, no. 2 (2012): 229–34.
[49]Chireshe, "Research Supervision: Postgraduate Students' Experiences in South Africa."
[50]Newman Wadesango and Severino Machingambi, "Post Graduate Students' Experiences with Research Supervisors," *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2011): 31–37.
[51]Norbaizura Mohd Naim and Saroja Dhanapal, "Students'perception Of The Supervisory Process: A Case Study At A Private University In Malaysia," *MOJEM: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management* 3, no. 4 (2017): 31–49.
[52]Chireshe, "Research Supervision: Postgraduate Students' Experiences in South Africa"; Yousefi, Bazrafkan, and Yamani, "A Qualitative Inquiry into the Challenges and Complexities of Research Supervision: Viewpoints of Postgraduate Students and Faculty Members."
[53]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[54]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[55]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."

students and cause them to lose motivation and abandon the programme.[56] Supervisors therefore should help the student to modify the topic instead of forcing the student to entirely change it.

Cekiso et al. reveal that some supervisors do not adhere to ethical issues. Most postgraduate students are adults who need to be treated with respect.[57] It is important for supervisors to respect and avoid any form of harassment and confrontation with students. At times the source of harassment and confrontation is the power dynamic in the student-supervisor relationship that is perceived to be unequal as supervisors have more powers than students.[58]In Golde and Dore's 2001 study cited by Chireshe on the experiences of postgraduate students, 46% of students stated that they would select a different supervisor if they were given an opportunity to do so.[59] The selection of the right topic and the right supervisor is therefore crucial in research supervision.

Strategies for Effective Research Supervision

Bahtilla and Yousefi et al.argue that one of the strategies to improve research supervision is to provide in-service training for research supervisors to enhance their competencies and keep them informed about research innovations.[60]Supervisors who are informed about recent changes in research are more likely to equip students with essential skills and knowledge needed to produce quality research outputs, and practical skills needed in the industry after graduation.[61]

Kimani advises universities to train and sensitise supervisors on the utilisation of new technology in research supervision.[62] Japheth et al. and Mafa and Mapolisa view workshops and seminars as tools that institutions could use to train their research supervisors and students.[63] Japheth et al note that there has been a paradigm shift in supervision that necessitates the need to change the way how research supervision is conducted.[64] Research supervisors should be trained so that they can learn modern methods of research supervision. Mafa and Mapolisa see the need for all students to do a research methodology module before they write their research proposal and conduct full research.[65]

Sidhu et al. believe that research supervision could improve if institutions provide students with required resources such asinternet access, library facilities, and funding for fieldwork and conference attendance.[66]Institutions also need to provide support services for diverse groups of students from different cultural backgrounds including students with disabilities.[67] Bahtilla stresses that students should be provided with resources or directed to where they canget resources.[68] Bahtilla's study showed that supervisors who provide or direct students where to access research resources are considered to be effective by the majority of students.[69] Bihtilla advises supervisors and students to meet every two weeks,

[56]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[57]Cekiso et al., "Supervision Experiences of Postgraduate Research Students at One South African Higher Education Institution."
[58]Suzanne E Morris, "Doctoral Students' Experiences of Supervisory Bullying," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 19, no. 2 (2011): 547–55.
[59]Chireshe, "Research Supervision: Postgraduate Students' Experiences in South Africa."
[60]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China"; Yousefi, Bazrafkan, and Yamani, "A Qualitative Inquiry into the Challenges and Complexities of Research Supervision: Viewpoints of Postgraduate Students and Faculty Members."
[61]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[62] Kimani, "Challenges in Quality Control for Postgraduate Supervision."
[63]Noel Japheth et al., "Strategies Used for Effective Research Supervision in the Completion of Postgraduate Studies in Selected Universities of Uganda," 2023; Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[64]Japheth et al., "Strategies Used for Effective Research Supervision in the Completion of Postgraduate Studies in Selected Universities of Uganda."
[65]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[66]Gurnam Kaur Sidhu et al., "Exploring Supervisors' Perspectives to Enhance Postgraduate Supervision," in *7th International Conference on University Learning and Teaching (InCULT 2014) Proceedings: Educate to Innovate* (Springer, 2016), 169–81.
[67] Kimani, "Challenges in Quality Control for Postgraduate Supervision."
[68]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[69]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."

and after the meeting write reports explaining the meeting outcomes.[70] Reports can help faculty leaders to offer suggestions for improvement.

Ngulube views coresupervision as one of the strategies that can result in effective research supervision.[71] Ngulube argues that a supervisor who holds a Masters degree can co-supervise with asupervisor who holds a Doctorate degree, and a supervisor who holds a Doctorate degree can co-supervise with a Professor. Such an approach would support supervisors as they learn the art of supervising from those who have more supervision experience and knowledge in a certain field than them. Supervising with a senior colleague provides an opportunity for capacity development forthe beginner supervisor. Olmos-Lopez and Sunderland view co-supervision as an important part of staff development.[72]Al-Muallem states that there is a need for supervision criteria which can be used to guide research supervisors as they supervise research students.[73] Bahtilla argues that research supervision could improve if there is constant evaluation and modification of the criteria used to select supervisors.[74] Once the supervisor selection criteria are modified and strengthened it is most likely that institutions would be able to select effective supervisors capable of continuous learning and improvement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study used the critical theory whose history dates back to the establishment of the Institute of Social Research in Germany Frankfurt School in 1924. A team from the gradual formation of the Institute gathered in the late 1920s to create a foundation for later critical theory.[75] Scholars such as Max Horkhaymr 1973, Marcuse 1979, Jurgen Habermas 1929, Freire 1937and Giroux 1942 despite slight differences in their ideas were advocates of the critical theory. The prominent influence of this group came from Max Horkhaymr who published a paper in a social research quarterly journal and among other things criticised endless richness rule and totalitarianism. The critical theory school of thought challenges dominant ways of exploring and explaining organisational phenomena.[76] The core of critical theory involves exposing existing modes of domination and oppression and offering alternative possibilities which emancipate those once silenced and excluded.

For a critical theory to be a critical theory in Horkheimer's view, it must explain what is wrong with the current social reality and identify the people and actors that can change it. The theory was deemed appropriate for the study since it advocates for analysis and changing the status quo to do things in an improved and better way. The theory enabled researchers to analyse how research supervision was done in Eswatini higher education institutions and generated transformative strategies for effective research supervision in institutions. Recommended strategies would emancipate supervisors and supervisees from old practices of research supervision that they were stuck with. Harney argues that allied with emancipatory intent, the critical theory not only reinterprets existing orders but offers alternative modes of understanding and being that liberate those silenced and shackled by conventional theory.[77] In Horkheimer's terms, this theory is critical since it seeks to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them.[78] The notion of emancipation is paramount to the study as it seeks to emancipate supervisors and supervisees from old research supervision paradigms and practices and empower them with new opportunities capable of improving their experiences and the quality of research outputs.

[70]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[71]Ngulube, "Postgraduate Supervision Practices in Education Research and the Creation of Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing."
[72]Pamela, Olmos-López and Jane Sunderland, " Doctoral Supervisors' and Supervisees' Responses to Co-Supervision," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 41, no. 6 (2017): 727–40.
[73]Al-Muallem, " Research Supervision: Faculty Perspectives."
[74]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[75]A. Salehi, "Objectives and Principles of Education from Critical Theorists POVS," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 89 (2013): 49–53.
[76]B. Harney, "Critical Theory. Encyclopaedia of Management," 2014, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261697559.
[77]Harney, "Critical Theory. Encyclopaedia of Management."
[78]Harney, "Critical Theory. Encyclopaedia of Management."

METHODOLOGY

The study used an interpretivist research paradigm which underpins qualitative research methodology. An interpretivist paradigm sees the interpretation of the world as subjective since it can be interpreted differently depending on the experiences and perspectives of individuals Cohen, Manion and Morrison.[79] An interpretive paradigm aims to understand people since humans are always trying to interpret, give meaning and rationalise daily actions. The aim of research in interpretivism is to understand and interpret everyday activities, experiences and social structures.[80] This paradigm suited the study as it sought to understand and interpret the experiences of supervisors and supervisees during the research supervision process. It also made it possible to use a qualitative research approach to respond in detail to the questions of the study. Face-to-face methods were used to collect rich data directly from participants in their natural settings in higher education institutions.[81]

A case study design was used to focus on three institutions of higher learning in Eswatini and study them in detail. A case study design allows for the use of interviews and focus group discussions to collect data.[82]Creswell and Poth, and McMillan and Schumacher view interviews and focus group discussions as effective for the generation of detailed information from participants.[83] Purposive sampling was used to select participants from the three institutions of higher education in Eswatini. From each institution, two research supervisors and two students doing their full research were purposively selected because they had comprehensive information about research supervision since they were directly involved in it. Twelve information-rich participants took part in the study. Unlike in quantitative studies where many respondents are needed, in qualitative research few participants are adequate as long as they possess in-depth information about the phenomenon.[84] Six research supervisors were interviewed using an interview guide, while six supervisees participated in focus group discussions that were moderated using a focus group discussion guide.

Data was analysed and interpreted under emerging themes in a narrative and verbatim manner McMillan and Schumacher. [85] Literature was used to support and dismiss findings as necessary. Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability constructs were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The credibility of the findings was ensured through triangulation of data collected from interviews and data collected through focus group discussions. Findings were also shared with participants to check whether they were a true reflection of what they said.[86] Dependability was ensured bygiving a detailed account ofthe research methodology so that anyone who wanted to replicate the study could do so and come up with similar results. Confirmability was ensured by sticking to questions in the interview guide and focus group discussion guide. Findings were shared with participants so that they could check whether they reflected their views.

Transferability was addressed bygiving an adequate description of the context of the study and methods used to collect data so that the study's results could be transferable to a similar context.[87] Ethical guidelines were upheld through informed consent, voluntary participation and non-disclosure of participant identity.[88] All participants signed consent forms with ethical guidelines before taking part in the study. They were also told of their right to withdraw from the study when they wanted to at any time without any victimisation. Data was kept safe in lockable shelves and computers that could only be accessed through passwords to protect it from falling into the hands of unauthorised people.

[79]L. Cohen, L. Manion, and K. Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 7th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011).
[80]A. Rubin and E. Babbie, *Essential Research Methods for Social Work* (New York: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2010).
[81]J. McMillan and S. Schumacher, *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry* , 7th ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2014).
[82]J.W. Creswell, *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approach*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd, 2014).
[83]John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016); McMillan and Schumacher, *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry* .
[84]Creswell, *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approach*.
[85]McMillan and Schumacher, *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry* .
[86]Vicent Naano Anney, "Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research: Looking at Trustworthiness Criteria," 2014.
[87]Anney, "Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research: Looking at Trustworthiness Criteria."
[88]McMillan and Schumacher, *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry* .

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data was analysed narratively and verbatim, and also concurrently discussed. Institutions were coded as Institution A, B and C. Supervisors were coded as Supervisor 1 from Institution A, supervisor 2 from Institution A, or Supervisor 1 from Institution C. Students were coded as Student 1 from Institution B, or Student 2 from Institution C. Findings are presented under the themes that emerged from data and interpretation.

Research Supervision

Participants explained what research supervision entails.

> *Research supervision is a process in which the supervisor who is an experienced researcher guides the student who is a researcher in the making, through the whole research process right from problem identification up to the conclusion of the whole research study* (Institution A, supervisor 1).

> *Research supervision is a process that occurs between the supervisor and the student who is a researcher. The student is taken step by step in writing a research report*
> (Institution C student 2).

> *The research supervision process involves many processes where someone experienced guides you in order to be successful* (Institution B student 1).

Participants' assertions are supported by Ngakane and Madlela who state that research supervision is a process whereby a supervisor guides supervisees step by step throughout the research journey from problem identification to data collection and analysis.[89] Mutula views the supervisor as experienced, and the student as an apprentice who needs to be mentored by an experienced supervisor.[90]

Roles of Supervisors

Participants said that supervisors have the following roles in research supervision.

Drafting the Supervision Contract

Participants said that before supervision commences the supervisor should draft a research contract that they should sign with the supervisee to guide them in the supervision process.

> *From the onset, the supervisor and supervisee should draft and sign a contract that clearly spells out their duties and responsibilities and deadlines for each activity from start to finish and publishing* (Institution B Supervisor 2).

Making everything clear from the onset would enable the supervisor and supervisee to understand all expectations and standards right from the beginning. The supervisor should sign the student supervisor agreement, and ensure that the student is aware of all policies and regulations related to the conducting of research.[91]

Creating a good working relationship with the student

Participants stated that for research supervision to succeed the supervisor should create a good working relationship with the supervisee.

> *As a supervisor, you should create a good relationship and motivate the student. A good relationship creates a good working atmosphere, making it easy for the student to consult the supervisor without any fear.* (Institution B Supervisor 1)

[89]Ngakane and Madlela, "Effectiveness and Policy Implications of Using WhatsApp to Supervise Research Projects in Open Distance Learning Teacher Training Institutions in Swaziland."
[90] S M Mutula, "Building Trust in Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship: Case Study of East and Southern Africa," in *Progress in Library and Information Science in Southern Africa (PROLISSA) Conference at the University of South Africa (UNISA)*, 2009, 4–6.
[91]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."

Students' research experiences improve when there is an engaging relationship with their supervisors that is based on mutual respect, professionalism and respect.[92] If supervisors build good relations with their supervisees, supervisees tend to be motivated to do their work and feel free to approach their supervisors anytime when they encounter challenges. Kimani (2014) states that approachable and supportive supervisors earn their students' trust.

Giving academic and psycho-social support

Participants said that research is a strenuous journey forthe student who needs adequate support from the institution and the supervisor.

> *The supervisor is supposed to support the student both on psycho-social and academic issues.* (Institution C, Supervisor 2).

> *The supervisor coaches the student and gives technical advice on how to go about different research stages. He/she gives emotional support and acts as a counsellor to help the student to distress* (Institution C, Supervisor 1).

These assertions are supported by Ngulube who says that research students depend on their supervisors' support to produce quality knowledge.[93] UJ states that the supervisor should monitor the student's progress, recommend corrective measures as necessary, and ensure that the student has access to the required resources.[94]The supervisor should direct the student to appropriate university structures for support on emotional wellness and social needs.[95]

Giving guidance and prompt feedback

Participants considered student guidance by the supervisor as essential in enabling the supervisees to navigate the research journey.

> *The supervisor should guide the student to come up with a research report that adheres to the rules of scientific research. Guidance should begin at the research topic formulation stageright up to the analysis and presentation of findings, including assisting the student to access information, training, and familiarisation with editing and plagiarism check software* (Institution A, Supervisor 1).

Kimani views a supervisor as the most trusted person who guides students in research according to the guidelines of the institution to produce quality research outputs.[96] Haksever and Manisali spell out that the supervisor should provide the student with direct research-related help through critical analysis of work and assisting in methodological problems.[97]The supervisor should provide academic guidance to the student to ensure the development of research skills and mastery of the research discipline. The supervisor should also introduce the student to the relevant academic networks through research seminars and conferences.[98] Proper guidance and support assist students in mastering the fundamentals of research including research ethical requirements.

Participants complained that instead of offering guidance some supervisors frustrate students.

> *Some supervisors force students to change their topics and research approaches to coverup for their shortcomings. Doing so is wrong. The supervisor's role is to guide and assist students to bring something new not to change their topics* (Institution B, Supervisor 1).

[92]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[93]Ngulube, "Postgraduate Supervision Practices in Education Research and the Creation of Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing."
[94]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[95]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy"; A Mehmet Haksever and Ekrem Manisali, "Assessing Supervision Requirements of PhD Students: The Case of Construction Management and Engineering in the UK," *European Journal of Engineering Education* 25, no. 1 (2000): 19–32.
[96] Kimani, "Challenges in Quality Control for Postgraduate Supervision."
[97] Haksever and Manisali, "Assessing Supervision Requirements of PhD Students: The Case of Construction Management and Engineering in the UK."
[98]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy"; University of Pretoria – UP, " Guidelines for Supervision."

Students expressed that they were frustrated by supervisors who forced them to change their research topics.[99] They said that such an act was tantamount to telling them to discontinue their studies. Forcing students to do research in areas that are not of their interest may depress students and cause them to lose motivation and abandon the programme.[100] A student who has strength in qualitative research is likely to struggle and dropout if forced by the supervisor to do quantitative research. Sidhu et al. argue that most students expect their supervisors to be competent, reasonable and supportive of their work.[101] This gets defeated if supervisors force students to change their topics and research approaches. Bahtilla advises supervisors to help the student modify the topic instead of forcing the student to completely change the topic.[102]

Participants noted that timely feedback is essential in guiding students throughout the research journey.

> *The supervisor should mentor the student and give prompt feedback* (Institution C, Supervisor 1).

> *Some supervisors delay giving students feedback and use temper if students make follow-ups.*(Institution B, Supervisor 2).

Sidhu and UP emphasise that the supervisor should provide timely and constructive feedback to the student.[103] Feedback is a vital component of learning.Sidhu believes that Students learn better from constructive feedback than criticism that undermines them by only exposing their weaknesses without stating how they should improve.[104]

Timeous communication of due processes

Participants said that research supervision also involves administrative requirements like application for funding and ethical clearance.

> *The supervisor should keep the student informed about deadlines for applying for funding, and ethical clearance to avoid missing deadlines* (Institution B, Student 2).

UJ emphasises that the supervisor should ensure that the student is aware of all regulations and policies related to their studies.[105] The policies of the institution have details on how and when funding and ethical clearance should be applied to avoid missing deadlines. Ngakane and Madlela state that supervisors can improve communication with their research students by using WhatsApp since most students use it.[106]

Roles of Supervisees

Participants said that students should take full ownership of their research work from the beginning up to the end.

> *The student is the owner and architecture of the study who identifies the problem, develops questions, and conducts the study according to the institution's research guidelines* (Institution A, Supervisor 1)

[99]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[100]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[101]Sidhu et al., "Postgraduate Supervision: Comparing Student Perspectives from Malaysia and the United Kingdom."
[102]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[103]Sidhu et al., "Postgraduate Supervision: Comparing Student Perspectives from Malaysia and the United Kingdom"; University of Pretoria – UP, " Guidelines for Supervision."
[104]Sidhu et al., "Postgraduate Supervision: Comparing Student Perspectives from Malaysia and the United Kingdom."
[105]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[106]Ngakane and Madlela, "Effectiveness and Policy Implications of Using WhatsApp to Supervise Research Projects in Open Distance Learning Teacher Training Institutions in Swaziland."

> *The student's role is to come up with a research topic, write a research proposal and compile the research report, defend it and share findings in consultation with the supervisor* (Institution B, Student 2)

These assertions show that the task of compiling the research report from start to finish is in the hands of the student. Yousuf et al, Lessing and UJ support the participants's above assertions as they see the role of the student beginning from problem identification up to compiling the final research report.[107]

Participants also stated that students should ensure that they sign the contract with their supervisors and communicate effectively with their supervisors.

> *Students should sign a contract with the supervisor, and communicate effectively with the supervisor to ensure that they meet set timelines and make follow-ups if feedback is delayed* (Institution C, Supervisor 1).

UJ expresses that the students should sign a student-supervisor agreement contract, and ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities.[108] They should also develop a research plan, discuss it with the supervisor, and adhere to its requirements.This would ensure that the student and the supervisor work according to their set timelines and standards. Yousuf et al. state that the student should communicate effectively with the supervisor.[109] Effective communication minimises delays and missed deadlines.

Though participants did not mention the student's role in improving themselves by attending research workshops, and ensuring that they adhere to academic writing standards and ethical guidelines, Abiddin and UJ views these as important in assisting the student to be an effective researcher.[110] UJ emphasises that it is the student's role to always adhere to academic integrity and research ethical requirements.[111]

Experiences of Supervisors

Supervisors said that they had less positive experiences and more negative experiences during research supervision.

Positive experiences of supervisors

Participants said that though research supervision is dominated by challenges, it has some pleasant experiences.

> *Pleasant experiences with students are a drop in the ocean. There are few students who take ownership of their work* (Institution A, Supervisor 1).
>
> *Supervisors tend to enjoy research supervision if they know the research area and have cooperative students. If the supervisee is knowledgeable about the research area, supervision tends to be enjoyable* (Institution B, Supervisor 1).
>
> *In some institutions, supervisors are given ongoing training and adequate tools forresearch supervision* (Institution A, Supervisor 1).

In Mafa and Mapolisa's study, most supervisors said that seeing students develop and achieve professionally and observing a student growing into an independent researcher was satisfying.[112] Supervisors described the satisfaction of working with enthusiastic students who came up with new

[107]Yousuf et al., "Research Supervision: Issues and Perspectives for Its Success"; Lessing, "The Role of the Supervisor in the Supervisory Process"; University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[108]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[109]Yousuf et al., "Research Supervision: Issues and Perspectives for Its Success."
[110] Norhasni Zainal Abiddin, Aminuddin Hassan, and Abdul Razaq Ahmad, "Research Student Supervision: An Approach to Good Supervisory Practice," *The Open Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (2009); University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[111]University of Johannesburg – UJ, " Student-Supervisor Relationship Policy."
[112]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."

knowledge. Bahtilla andYousefi et al. note that training equips research supervisors with the knowledge that makes them effective and enjoy research supervision.[113]

Negative experiences of supervisors

Participants raised a number of unpleasant situations that they encountered during the research supervision exercise.

> *The first nasty experience is when the supervisor supervises the research area or level that he/she is not familiar with. Due to the push of money, some supervisors take titles that they are not conversant with. Most institutions identify incompetent and untrained supervisors who struggle and frustrate students* (Institution B, Supervisor 1).

Al-Muallem states that the lack of training of some research supervisors makes them struggle with the research supervision process.[114] Inexperienced and untrained supervisors might be frustrated by the complex research supervision exercise, and end up being stressed instead of enjoying the process.

Participant also noted that their institutions lacked research support and policies.

> *We operate in an environment of scarce resources in terms of finances and information. There are no clear research policies to guide research supervision and institutions are not keen to embrace the latest trends in research* **(**Institution A, Supervisor 1).

> *Institutions do not have support programmes for students and supervisors with challenges. This compromises the quality of research* (Institution C, Supervisor 1).

> *Workload is also a challenge to supervisors who overload themselves with many students to get more money* (Institution B Supervisor 2).

Working in an environment without resources and clear research policies makes it impossible for supervisors and students to be guided properly.UJ 2021 and UP 2012 research policies are documents that institutions can benchmark with to develop their research policies.Al-Muallem views the lack of a conducive research environment as having effects on the research process and its outcomes.[115]

Supervisors were frustrated by students' lack of research skills whichled them to submit plagiarised work or to ask other people to write research reports for them that were far above their level.

> *Most students just do research to graduate. They lack academic writing skills. Sometimes they simply reproduce previous studies from the library and the internet without analysis*(Institution C, Supervisor 1).

> *Several students lack the foundation of research. Instead of supervising you start by teaching them what research is and how to formulate research topics, and this is frustrating* (Institution C, Supervisor 2).

> *The culture of research is very poor because all groups seem to be the same. The problem is that most institutions just push students to do research without writing a proper research proposal first* (InstitutionA Supervisor 2).

Most research students do not have a strong academic writing background and have poor academic literacy. Their research limitations range from failure to come up with a researchable topic and develop a proper research proposal, because some institutions do not offer undergraduate students a research module.[116] Such a scenario forces supervisors to go back to research basics, and thisconsumes supervision

[113]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China"; Yousefi, Bazrafkan, and Yamani, "A Qualitative Inquiry into the Challenges and Complexities of Research Supervision: Viewpoints of Postgraduate Students and Faculty Members."

[114]Al-Muallem, " Research Supervision: Faculty Perspectives."

[115]Al-Muallem, " Research Supervision: Faculty Perspectives."

[116]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."

time and energy.Mafa and Mapolisa argue that in the end due to time pressure, students tend to produce poor work or fail to meet submission deadlines.[117]

Students' failure to work on feedback and submit it promptly frustrated supervisors.

Sometimes some students don't work on giving feedback up to the last chapter. They disappear and come at the end with a complete document 3 days before submission when there is no time to guide them (Institution C, Supervisor 1).

Some students do not have laptops to type their work (Institution B, Supervisor 2).

Lack of working tools like laptops affects students' progress in research. Students who do not work on given feedback prejudice themselves of learning, because feedback is a fundamental component of learning. Yousuf et al. encourage students to have close relationships with their supervisors.[118]Delayed and poor remuneration frustrated supervisors.

The remuneration is low and demotivating because you are paid after students have long finished when you have forgotten about it (Institution C, Supervisor 2).

According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs motivation theory people are motivated to work when their needs are met. Poor and delayed payments are likely to make supervisors pay less attention to the supervision process resulting in compromised research outputs. Vroom's expectancy theory states that people tend to work hard if they are expecting to get compensation that is commensurate with the given task. Research supervision is a technical and protracted process that needs prompt and competitive compensation.

Experiences of Supervisees

Supervisees shared unpleasant experiences only though they said that sometimes supervisors' comments tended to be helpful.

If I had known, I could not have started this. You need endurance and to make a lot of sacrifices. Sometimes after working on the supervisor's feedback and submitting it, the supervisor gives more comments that were not initially given. Sometimes supervisors demand that you remove certain things and later demand them to be included. Sometimes supervision is not effective, even if you don't agree with the supervisor they impose since they are the ones who approve the study (Institution B, Student 1).

Supervisors delay the process of completing research by delaying giving feedback at times by two months. Sometimes feedback doesn't make sense. Sometimes supervisors bully students when they make follow-ups on delayed feedback. Most students get frustrated and end up not completing research (Institution C, student 1).

I was frustrated by the theoretical framework and I needed help from my supervisor, but help was not coming through. I felt I was travelling the journey alone. (Institution A, Student 2)

Students complained that feedback arrived when they had forgotten what discussion issues were, and it became difficult for them to be motivated to act on the supervisors' feedback.[119]Students complained that supervisors tend to give feedback that conflicts with previous feedback.[120] In Wadesango and Machingambi's study 75% of student respondents were not satisfied with their supervisors' feedback.[121] Some students noted that there was tension and conflicting perspectives within the supervisory role, disagreements and poor communication, selfishness and disrespectfulness, and limited expertise and knowledge in the field of study.[122] Delayed feedback which is at times poor and contradictory, the

[117]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[118]Yousuf et al., "Research Supervision: Issues and Perspectives for Its Success."
[119]Cekiso et al., "Supervision Experiences of Postgraduate Research Students at One South African Higher Education Institution."
[120]Chireshe, "Research Supervision: Postgraduate Students' Experiences in South Africa."
[121]Wadesango and Machingambi, "Post Graduate Students' Experiences with Research Supervisors."
[122]Chireshe, "Research Supervision: Postgraduate Students' Experiences in South Africa."

incompetence of some supervisors and their bullying tendencies cannot lead to a health research supervision environment. Supervisor-supervisee relationships should be professional because most research students are professional adults.

Sometimes some supervisors are not friendly.(Institution A, student 1).

Sometimes you don't agree with your supervisor, but the supervisor has powers and tends to override what you are proposing, and as a student, you can't do anything (Institution B, Student 2).

The research work belongs to the student who should fully own it. It is not the supervisor's role to abuse their powers and override the student's interests. Bahtilla says that supervisors should help students modify their work rather than force them to change their focus altogether.[123] Cekiso et al. advise supervisors who do not adhere to ethical issues, that most postgraduate students are adults who need to be treated with respect.[124]

Participants said that since most students did not work, it was a challenge for them to raise adequate resources needed forresearch. The supervisor,therefore, should orient the student on the institution's policies so that if there are funding opportunities the student might apply. Bahtilla, Haksever, and Manisali say that the supervisor should provide resources to students or direct them to where they can access resources.[125]

Strategies for Effective Research Supervision

Participants suggested strategies that could be utilised to improve research supervision.

There should be a compulsory research methods module, and research proposal which qualifies students to conduct research in the field (Institution B, Supervisor 2).

Mafa and Mapolisa state that there is a need for an initial research module for a semester where all students are exposed to research methodology before they write their research proposal and conduct full research.[126] If institutions could introduce an examinable research module and research proposal carrying credits, students could be empowered with basic research skills before undertaking full research.

Participants noted that for research to improve the institutions should enact research policies and review old ones.

Institutions should develop research policies and modernise old ones to align with modern research trends (Institution B, Supervisor 2).

Introducing research proposals and research defence 'vivo voce' in research policies could reduce academic dishonesty, but it is also essential to improve the culture of research. Students should be prepared for research beyond Swaziland. Introducing a system like the UNISA dashboard where the supervisor regularly reports what he/she has done with the student can improve research supervision (Institution C Supervisor 2).

Bahtilla notes that as research is going on, new discoveries are made. Research policies in institutions therefore should accommodate these new discoveries.[127] The UNISA dashboard system where the supervisor reports progress with the student could be benchmarked with by institutions to improve their

[123]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."
[124]Cekiso et al., "Supervision Experiences of Postgraduate Research Students at One South African Higher Education Institution."
[125] Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China"; Haksever and Manisali, "Assessing Supervision Requirements of PhD Students: The Case of Construction Management and Engineering in the UK."
[126]Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[127]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China."

reporting on research supervision. Bahtilla and Cardilini, Risely and Richardson believe that regular meetings and periodic progress reports improve research supervision.[128]

> *To improve research in the country, institutions should establish research committees responsible for facilitating different research activities.*(C, Supervisor 1).

> *Institutions should hire competent supervisors, and continuously train them. Some supervisors are incompetent, and they hide their incompetence by blaming it on students and forcing students to change their research topics and research areas to coverup their incompetence* (Institution B, Supervisor 2).

> *To deal with issues of supervisor shortcomings, institutions should train them and also introduce the concept of co-supervision.* (Institution C, Supervisor 1).

> *If supervisors are not doing well there should be channels forreporting them to the institution. Supervisors sometimes make mistakes and don't want to account*
> (Institution B, Student 1).

The participants' strategy of having supervisors trained is supported by Bahtilla and Yousefi et al. who argue that in-service training of supervisors improves research supervision through empowering supervisors with innovative research supervision skills.[129]The critical theory calls for emancipation from old practices and embracing new ways of doing something.[130]Co-supervision is supported by Ngulube who views it as one of the strategies that allows the main supervisor and co-supervisor to work as a team and share knowledge to effectively supervise the student.[131] Co-supervisors tend to learn the art of supervision from experienced supervisors.

Participants noted that technology can be introduced to expedite the research supervision process.

> *Virtual discussions between students and their supervisors on Zoom and Microsoft Teams can be used, and chapters can be submitted to supervisors online to reduce transport costs for students* (Institution A, Supervisor 2).

Most institutions are still stuck in traditional ways of forcing students to submit hard copies and giving students feedback face-to-face. Kimani advises institutions to train supervisors to utilise new technology in supervision.[132] Ngakane and Madlela reveal that WhatsApp is an effective technological platform for research supervision.[133]

Participants called for research funding, training of students and encouraging them to publish their research outputs.

> *Institutions should train students and assist them to attend conferences and publish their research works. In conferences, students can showcase their research work and share ideas with their supervisors and peers about their studies* (Institution B, Supervisor 2).

> *Institutions should support students with necessary resources like laptops and internet and research funding.* (Institution C, Supervisor 1).

[128]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China"; Adam P A Cardilini, Alice Risely, and Mark F Richardson, "Supervising the PhD: Identifying Common Mismatches in Expectations between Candidate and Supervisor to Improve Research Training Outcomes," *Higher Education Research & Development* 41, no. 3 (2022): 613–27.

[129]Bahtilla, "Research Supervision of International Doctoral Students: Perspectives of International Students in Two Comprehensive Universities in China"; Yousefi, Bazrafkan, and Yamani, "A Qualitative Inquiry into the Challenges and Complexities of Research Supervision: Viewpoints of Postgraduate Students and Faculty Members."

[130]C Nickerson, "Understanding Critical Theory. Simply Psychology," 2022.

[131]Ngulube, "Postgraduate Supervision Practices in Education Research and the Creation of Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing."

[132] Kimani, "Challenges in Quality Control for Postgraduate Supervision."

[133]Ngakane and Madlela, "Effectiveness and Policy Implications of Using WhatsApp to Supervise Research Projects in Open Distance Learning Teacher Training Institutions in Swaziland."

Japheth et al. and Mafa and Mapolisa view periodic workshops as an effective strategyfor training research supervisors and students.[134] Sidhu et al. state that research supervision could improve if institutions could provide the required infrastructure and resources such as library facilities, internet, and computers that are needed by research students.[135]

Participants suggested that institutions should pay research supervisors a competitive rate in time. *Institutions should pay supervisors a competitive remuneration rate on time. Remuneration is always small yet the amount of work is big. Poor and delayed remuneration can compromise the quality of research supervision* (Institution B, Supervisor 1).

Yousuf et al view research supervision as a process of providing professional guidance and monitoring the student throughout the research journey to produce research of higher quality.[136] Since professional guidance and monitoring are necessary for research supervision to produce quality, it is necessary to motivate supervisors.

Limitations of the Study

The study used a qualitative research approach, whichmeans that its findings could not be generalised. Findings though could be transferable to other institutions of higher education with similar research supervision contexts.

Discussion Summary

From the findings, it has been established that supervisors and supervisees have roles to play in research supervision. The supervisor'srole is to guide the supervisee step by step from research topic formulation, and problem identification, familiarisation with research and funding policies up to data collection and submission of the final research report for examination. Supervisors should also help supervisees attend research workshops and conferences and publish their research outputs in journals. The supervisee has a role to work closely with the supervisor and take responsibility for their research work from start to finish, ensuring that they attend research workshops and also adhere to academic writing standards and research ethics. It was also established that supervisors and supervisees encountered different experiences during the supervision process. Supervisors had less positive experiences and more negative ones. Supervisors encountered unpleasant experiences when students reneged from their responsibilities and chose to embark on academic dishonesty such as plagiarising previous studies.

It was also established that supervisees encountered unpleasant experiences due to supervisors who forced them to change their research topics and approaches to cover up for their shortcomings. Supervisees' unpleasant experiences also emanated from delayed, contradictory and unhelpful feedback from their research supervisors. It was further revealed that some supervisors abused their powers and threatened students who held different views from theirs. Also, some students did not have funding and other necessary resources needed in research such as the internet and laptops. Another finding made was that some institutions engaged incompetent supervisors, and they did not have standard policies to guide research supervision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that institutions of higher education should engage qualified and competent research supervisors, train research supervisors and supervisees through research workshops and equip them with current research knowledge and supervision skills. They should also support students with resources needed in research and help them to publish their research outputs, organise conferences where students could showcase their research outputs, establish open lines of communication for students to report their progress with their supervisors, enact research policies and align old ones with modern research trends. Institutions must establish research committees and introduce research defence viva voce

[134]Japheth et al., "Strategies Used for Effective Research Supervision in the Completion of Postgraduate Studies in Selected Universities of Uganda"; Mafa and Mapolisa, "Supervisors' Experiences in Supervising Postgraduate Education Students' Dissertations and Theses at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)."
[135]Sidhu et al., "Exploring Supervisors' Perspectives to Enhance Postgraduate Supervision."
[136]Yousuf et al., "Research Supervision: Issues and Perspectives for Its Success."

and pay competitive research supervision rates in time. Supervisors and supervisees should sign research supervision contracts stipulating their responsibilities, standards and timelines for the whole research process. Supervisors should embrace available technological platforms such as Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp to improve the research supervision process.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the experiences of supervisors and supervisees in research supervision. An interpretivist research paradigm and a qualitative research approach were used to collect data from students and supervisors. From the findings, it has been established that supervisors and supervisees have roles to play in research supervision. The supervisor's role is to guide the supervisee step by step from research topic formulation, and problem identification, familiarisation with research and funding policies up to data collection and submission of the final research report for examination. On the other hand, the supervisee has a role to work closely with the supervisor and take responsibility for their research work from start to finish, ensuring that they attend research workshops and also adhere to academic writing standards and research ethics. However, the findings revealed that supervisors and supervisees had negative experiences during the research supervision process which hindered the outcome of the research work. Hence, research supervision could improve if supervisors and supervisees could all play their roles, and if institutions could engage competent supervisors and train them and students. Availing resources to students by the institutions, and embracing technology in research supervision can improve the process.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest to declare in relation to this paper.

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