

REFLECTION OF EXPERIENCES WITH ACADEMIC SUPERVISORS, SUPERVISEES AND ISSUES OF POWER

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ABSTRACT

Academic supervision is essential for developing students' careers and educational advancement. The systematic review approach was chosen for the methodology of this study. It has been observed in the literature that there are positive and negative experiences between supervisees and their supervisors. This led to the research gap in the study, which stated that supervisors and their supervisees are inadequately prepared for their roles. The study addressed these gaps through a systematic review of the article sub-topics. The conceptual model was adopted for this article, and it articulates how supervisors can exhibit their dispositional qualities. Additionally, this article recommends enhancing creative and innovative research to intensify a sense of autonomy and periodically updating research instructions on actualising the vision and mission statements of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). The study further recommends that training initiatives for supervisors should be encouraged in HEIs through academic research groups, among others.

Keywords: academia, teaching experience, Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), supervisee, supervisor

INTRODUCTION

The supervision of academic research in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) is often related to the conventional, one-to-one communication between students and their supervisors (Andersen and Dupont 2015). In the academic setting, supervision is designed to aid students in evolving into autonomous researchers and scholars in their respective fields. This equips them to adapt effectively to diverse research environments within universities or industries. Good rapport and communication between supervisors and students are essential (Wisker 2012). Academic supervision is an important aspect of higher education and critical for ensuring research and scholarly work quality. In South Africa, academic supervisors guide and

mentor postgraduate students and early-career researchers in their academic and professional development. One of the critical functions of academic supervisors in the South African context is to provide guidance and support to supervisees throughout the research process. This encompasses assisting supervisees in formulating research inquiries, planning studies, gathering and analysing data, and documenting their discoveries. Another important function of academic supervisors is to provide mentorship and support to supervisees as they navigate their academic and professional careers. This can include helping supervisees to develop skills such as time management, critical thinking, and communication, as well as offering advice and guidance on career opportunities and advancement.

Additionally, academic supervisors are responsible for providing feedback on the quality of the research and offering suggestions for improvement where necessary. According to Le (2012), the supervision of graduate research has orthodoxly been considered research in the academic world, which is focused on the timely production of the research-centred written thesis and the efforts of the student and supervisor. Azure (2016) stated supervisors could efficiently supervise because they also engage in research. The independence of such supervisor-student collaboration stems from the angle of choice, with students and supervisors choosing whom they wish to work with. Hence, the consequential rapport combines the professional with personal anticipations and becomes one of the critical factors in determining the experiences derived from supervising and being supervised. Thus, the relationship and expectations of both parties form the focal point of research supervision (Ghani 2020; Tahir et al. 2012). In many studies, supervisors play several technical roles in facilitating students' progress, including instructing, mentoring, advising, coaching, teaching, and counselling (Roberts and Watson 2016). This study was also supported by some recent studies on research supervision, including (Lee 2010; Erichsen, Bolliger, and Halupa 2014; Wanyama and Eyamu 2021).

Furthermore, it was revealed that supervision is a unique and resourceful form of pedagogy. The distinctions in supervisory practices are hinged on the supervisor's opinions of research and its tenacity (Grant 2010). Even though Lee (2010) does not conceptualise supervision as a type of teaching, The scholar distinguishes the role of individual opinions in shaping supervisory methods and giving room for personal experiences as a causative influence. Most supervisors also utilise their past experiences of how they were supervised as graduate students in the cause of supervision (Hibbert et al. 2014).

The supervisor-supervisee relationship enhances students' academic and career development. According to (Blair, Watson, and Raturi 2020), academic supervision is significant in supporting and imparting students' development because it offers an opportunity

to discuss graduate students' research and identify and explore critical concerns pertinent to the chosen topic of supervisees. Academic supervision also encourages the supervised to meet the academic standards required for passing their assignments. Hence, good supervision should inspire students to reach their full potential, which is premised on the fact that many students often enter higher educational institutions with little academic experience. Further, supervision should be a contractual rapport discussed between the supervisor and student (Mastoras and Andrews 2011). Thus, a breakdown in the cordial relationship between the duo may culminate in students' potential failure.

RESEARCH GAP

Lupanda (2020) posits that in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), the central aim of higher education is to guarantee enhanced academic supervision. It is germane to state that supervisees must acquire knowledge through exploratory research to sustain their career development and promote quality education in HEIs. Amidst the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), contemporary higher education institutions (HEIs) are progressing with the aid of research and academic supervision, enabled by diverse methods like massive open online courses (MOOCs), virtual classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and virtual supervisors. However, these steps do not guarantee solutions to the problems examined mainly by supervisors–supervisees. Therefore, this study aims to add to the existing knowledge from other empirical studies related to the topic. Despite the satisfactory disposition of supervisees concerning their supervision, the supervisory relationship has significantly been criticised in the exploratory research sector. For instance, Gordon (2019) stated that interpersonal communication skills and supportive attitudes are required for a smooth-working supervisor/supervisee relationship. It is also important to note that supervisors do not naturally possess these skills. Hence, it is expedient for HEIs to provide the required training for supervisors. Furthermore, the studies reveal that supervisors and supervisees are inadequately prepared for their roles; hence the study addressed these gaps.

METHODOLOGY

This review article examines the reflection of experiences with academic supervisors, supervisees and issues of power. This study's methodology involved searching various sources, including e-journals, peer-reviewed books, Google Scholar, and other relevant articles. This literature reports on reflection of experiences with academic supervisors, supervisees and issues of power by examining the following questions: First, what makes good academic supervision? Secondly, what are supervisees' expectations and the associated challenges of supervision? Thirdly, how can healthy academic supervisor-supervisee relationships be fostered?

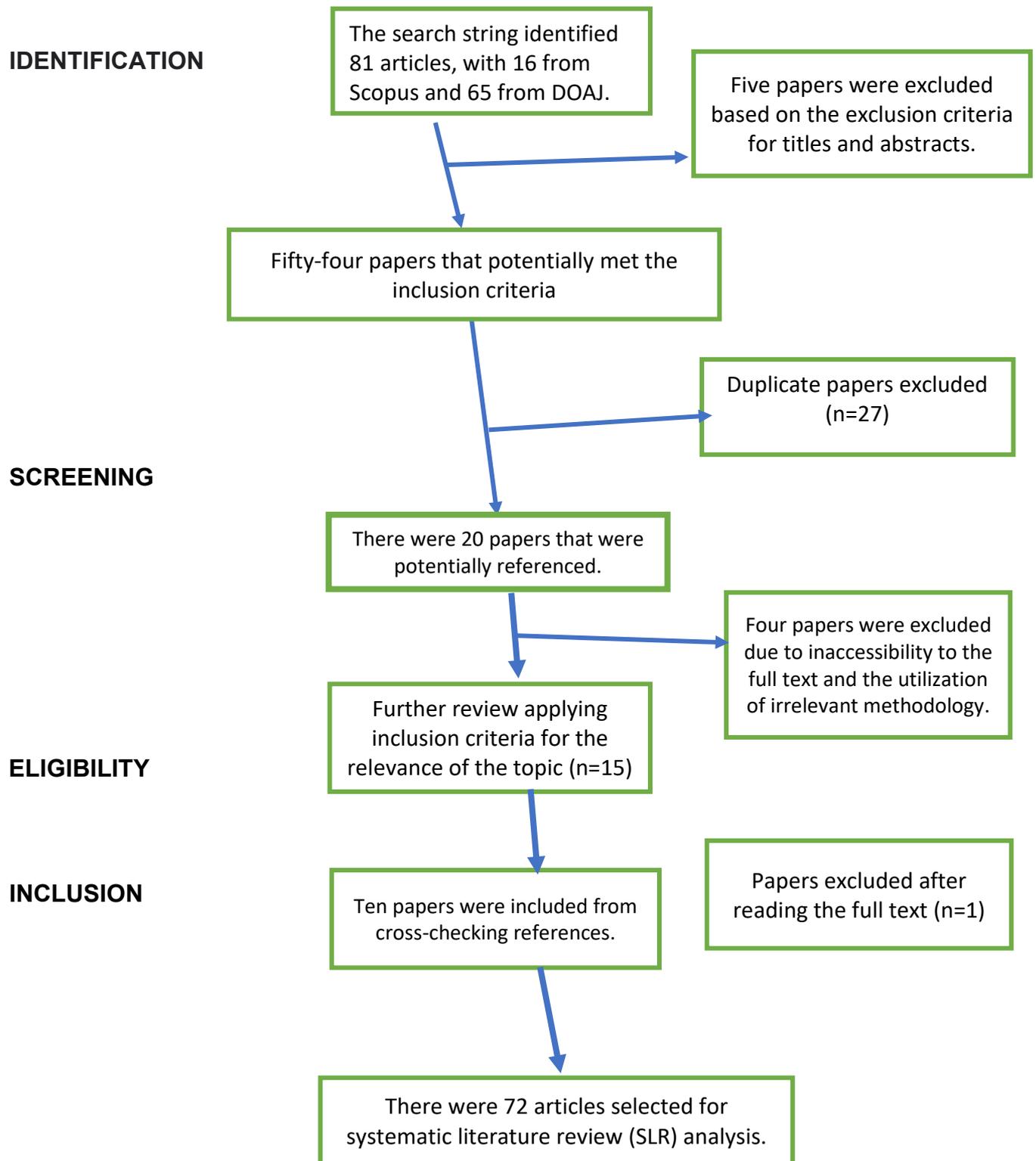


Figure 1: The flow diagram used for the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) (Haque, Hasan, and Any 2022)

Conceptualising academic supervisors, and supervisees and managing power issues provide a platform for actualising professionalism in supervision. This can support a culture of openness

and candour and help supervisors and supervisees achieve their expectations. Figure 1 illustrates the flow diagram used by the authors to evaluate the distinct phases of a systematic review.

The systematic flow diagram depicted in Figure 1, adopted in the review article, delineates the process of accessing, including, and excluding academic databases of empirical studies and the reasons for exclusions. This flow diagram, utilised for the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), significantly enhanced the study. It guided the structuring of this research article, encompassing sections such as title, abstract, introduction, methods, sub-topics, and references. The SLR flow diagram served several essential purposes:

Identifying articles for review.

Screening articles for review.

Ascertaining the eligibility of the review articles.

Finalising the list of studies to include in the systematic review.

The initial search through Google yielded 81 articles, with 65 articles from Direct Open Access Journal and 6 articles from Scopus. After downloading the 81 selected articles, 27 duplicate papers were excluded. Subsequently, 11 articles were excluded upon full-text reading as they did not adequately address the topic under review. On the other hand, ten additional articles were included after cross-checking references, and 15 more were added due to their relevance to the research topic. Additionally, 1 article were excluded due to irrelevant abstracts and titles, while four others were excluded because of their irrelevant methodologies and inaccessible full texts. Thus, 72 articles were selected for SLR analysis in this research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research in this study adopts a conceptual model as its theoretical framework, guiding in exploring the question, “To what extent can the model aid academic supervision?” The model also facilitates the description of supervisor/supervisees’ values, beliefs, and attitudes. Notably, Siegel (2010) has offered valuable insights into supervisors’ mindfulness traits and dispositional qualities during academic supervision and supportive supervisory relationships. The supervisory relationship plays a crucial role in addressing challenges faced by supervisees, who often experience anxiety, lack of authenticity, and uncertainties while establishing their scholarly identity (Van Rooij, Fokkens-Bruinsma, and Jansen 2021; Buirski 2022). Drinane et al. (2021) emphasise that the successful academic development of supervisees aligns with the culture of specialism and supervisors’ beliefs, attitudes, and values, which guide supervisees in their academic duties, commitments, responsibilities, and scholarly conventions. Henderson

(2018) adds that the supervisory relationship is integral to knowing and developing a scholarly identity. However, Ladany et al. (2013) highlights that cultural shifts are necessary to foster respectful, trusting, and reciprocal one-to-one supervisory relationships, which are vital for successful supervision (Buirski 2020). McAlpine and McKinnon (2013) state that supervision candidature represents a rite of passage towards a successful academic career. During candidature, supervisees face both intellectual and emotional challenges, making it essential for supervisors to understand and address the emotional aspects of the process. Effective interpersonal communication is vital in developing a high-quality supervisory relationship (Muthanna and Alduais 2021). This includes verbal and non-verbal communication, where supervisors must be attuned to unspoken messages conveyed through emotions, behaviours, and body language (Wisker and Claesson 2013). Parry (2007) emphasises the significance of connection in successful supervisory relationships, and supervisors must possess practical interpersonal communication skills and supportive attitudes and behaviours. However, Kiley (2017) points out that not all supervisors naturally possess these skills, and universities may not always provide the necessary training. In this article, the authors review the expectations and issues affecting supervision, presenting a new conceptual model focused on supportive ways of being for supervisors and supervision that may inform the development of supervisees. The author also contends that universities, as the primary focus of research activity, need to address supervision challenges and contribute to advancing knowledge in various disciplines. The main motive of supervision is to contribute to knowledge in the discipline, with the supervisee's thesis, dissertation, or project being clear, accurate, logical, persuasive, and well-documented. Universities can assist in fostering closer relationships and understanding the concept of original supervision, benefiting both supervisees and supervisors.

WHAT MAKES GOOD ACADEMIC SUPERVISION?

The conceptual features culminating from good supervision are often actualised locally and are frequently a product of consensus and contestations. Gordon, (2019) reviewed the literature on educational supervision and has consistently identified four university supervisory methods. These methods include social reconstructionism, progressivism, traditionalism, and enterprise. The aforementioned scholars express three of these supervisory methods, such as society-changing (social reconstructionism), academic (traditionalism), and market (enterprise). Bøgelund (2015) explained that deploying one or combinations of these supervisory methods at different points will strengthen good supervision. The use of power (for example, the existing ability among supervisors and their supervisees), the ethical supervising practice structure, and supervisory behaviour enhance good supervision. However, they are not wholly determined by

good supervision (Kemmis and Mahon 2017). Over the past decade, knowledge sharing among supervisees and their supervisors has been a more important consideration in the new academic supervision trend. New supervisory practices and ethical considerations encompass a range of approaches, such as committee supervision and joint supervision, where multiple supervisors guide a single student, providing them with diverse and complementary expertise. Another innovative approach is using supervision groups, representing a fundamental change in research education and training methodologies. In this setting, supervisees collaborate and share access to academic resources while offering intellectual support and guidance to one another within their research community.

Furthermore, research supervision is arguably a process of transferring knowledge acquired through research activities. Thus, academic supervision enhances and fosters research, communication and learning at the highest level (Al-Rahmi, Othman, and Yusuf 2015). Supervisees generally believe that research supervision enhances their personal, professional, or academic goals, as well as learning about the quality standards of the system. From the preceding, it is expedient for supervisors to contribute their quota in advancing intellectualism through creating adequate research and learning opportunities to enhance the delivery of quality research endeavours and successful academic supervision. The supervision process is indeed a subtle, complex, and pivotal responsibility. The prerequisites for quality supervision include proper research orientation, title, familiarity with the supervision process, advanced technical knowledge, and competence in academic supervision (Bastalich 2017).

In her study, Madikizela (2017) examines postgraduate supervision practices in South African universities and highlights their crucial role in the success of postgraduate students and overall university productivity. The author identifies several prevalent challenges within the process through a systematic review of the literature on postgraduate supervision in South Africa. These challenges include the absence of clear policies and guidelines, insufficient training and support for supervisors, and ineffective communication between supervisors and supervisees. The author acknowledges that some universities have tried to tackle these issues, but such initiatives have been inconsistent in their implementation. Madikizela concludes that there is a need for a more coordinated and systematic approach to improving postgraduate supervision in South Africa, including developing clear policies and guidelines, providing training and support for supervisors, and establishing mentorship programs. This article offers significant perspectives on the current state of postgraduate supervision in South Africa. It emphasises the necessity for additional research and proactive measures to enhance the quality of supervision within this setting.

For mutual understanding and expectations, students and supervisors should sustain open

communication and negotiate arising mismatches during supervision (Roach, Christensen, and Rieger. 2019; Masek and Alias 2020; Baydarova, Collins, and Saadi 2017). It has also been discovered in the literature that mutual expectations must be successfully aligned between supervisees and supervisors for lifelong collaboration and timely research completion (Stewart and McClure 2013). Thus, the factors influencing good supervision can be grouped into four primary categories, as elucidated below:

Category 1

The level of guidance provided characterises this supervisory category, regular meetings held, dedicated time allocated to the supervisee, fostering an environment that encourages the development of original concepts, inspiring creativity and innovation, offering flexibility in project selection, supporting conference attendance, promoting close interaction with other researchers, and facilitating the publication of original research articles even before the completion of the student's degree program.

Category 2

This category involves the demonstration of supervisory competence in student dissertations, expertise in the project area, familiarity with the relevant academic literature and scientific competence.

Category 3

This category underscores the attitudes and traits of supervisors, evident in their friendly and approachable nature, organisational skills, thoroughness, positive and supportive demeanour, open-mindedness, ability to acknowledge mistakes, and ability to convey enthusiasm and motivation. Additionally, areas of significance in this category include the absence of supervisors' preoccupation with recognition or wealth and their political compatibility.

Category 4

Supervisors in this category usually possess intellectual and academic capabilities, reflected in their ability as flexible/creative thinkers. They also have good publication records, excellent research scholarship, regular involvement in their research, attracting external research funding, and being professionally influential and interactive in their academic endeavour.

The ultimate purpose of research supervision is to complete the research with a good-quality dissertation/thesis. As stated by Cekiso et al. (2019), supervisors should possess sufficient

knowledge in various areas, including national educational policies, supervisory practices, student admission procedures, orientation education, guiding supervision principles, admission processes for supervisees, supervision plan design, research, teaching, evaluation of student study plans, and ideological education. It is also germane to state that a successful research supervision process is further enhanced when integrated with knowledge management, in a study conducted by Ives and Rowley (2005) relating to allocating supervisors to students. The research findings depict that students are likelier to make good progress and enjoy adequate supervision when supervisors are experienced supervisors and senior academics, it behoves supervisors to encourage good learning platforms for their students to fully utilise their theoretical and practical experiences to enhance their student's academic development.

In contrast, supervisors' assessment would be based on research competence, communication, frequency and moral cultivation. Supervisors can considerably impact their students' perceptions and quality of research experience (Madikizela-Madiya and Atwebembeire, 2020). According to Andriopoulou and Prowse, (2020), supervisors and supervisees must have a cordial relationship in their interactions. Supervisors are also expected to exhibit tolerance towards their students' behaviour and personal conduct, fostering a positive relationship and ensuring effective communication between the students and themselves (Ndayambaje 2018). In addition, supervisors are expected to provide exposure, protection, sponsorship, counselling, visibility and coaching for their students (Hooley, 2019).

SUPERVISEES' EXPECTATIONS AND THE ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES OF SUPERVISION

According to Pinto and Araújo e Sá (2020), the educational supervision process represents an intercultural encounter marked by the interaction between the powerful and the vulnerable as they strive to attain academic advancement. In the same vein, Alam, Alam, and Rasul (2013) pronounced that learning could be a complex endeavour for many supervisees, which could be worsened if there is self-doubt on the part of the ownership. Harrison and Grant, (2015) states that the privilege of learning in general terms and problem-solving is essential for supervisees' sense of achievement. However, Watson and Blair (2018) said that there is a need for supervisors to appreciate the recognition of their supervisees' career goals. Hence, supervisors should provide research direction for their supervisors at the commencement of the supervisory process; after that, they are to take a step back to give room for development (Thompson et al. 2005). Supervisees and supervisors encounter various issues. These challenges encompass various areas, such as cross-cultural adjustment, mental health, and financial aspects (Doyle and Welfare 2022). Additionally, there are challenges regarding aligning supervisee-supervisor

expectations (Baydarova, Collins and Saadi 2017; Masek and Alias 2020; Roach et al. 2019). In the South African context, academic supervisors play a crucial role; however, they often face challenges due to the lack of training and support, leading to poor supervision practices that negatively impact the research quality. Additionally, there is a shortage of academic supervisors in South Africa, which can lead to long waitlists for students seeking supervision and result in reduced quality of supervision for those who do receive it (Mkhize and Mouton 2018).

Bacchus and Weideman (2016) thoroughly examine postgraduate supervision in South Africa, delving into the challenges and opportunities inherent in this process. Through a review of existing literature and in-depth interviews with postgraduate students, academic supervisors, and other stakeholders, the authors gain profound insights into the supervision process's intricacies and potential in South Africa. The authors find that some main challenges include poor communication between supervisors and supervisees, a lack of clear expectations and guidelines for supervision, and conflicting priorities between supervisors and supervisees. However, the authors also identify several opportunities for improvement, such as developing clear supervision policies, establishing mentorship programs, and providing training and support for supervisors. This article provides valuable insights into the experience of postgraduate supervision in South Africa. It is a helpful resource for those looking to understand the challenges and opportunities facing this process in the South African higher education context.

Lekalakala-Mokgele and Nkopane (2016) examine postgraduate supervision practices in South African universities in this article. The authors argue that the quality of postgraduate supervision significantly impacts the success of postgraduate students and the productivity of universities and that there is a need for a critical examination of supervision practices in the South African context. The authors find several challenges facing postgraduate supervision in South Africa, including poor communication between supervisors and supervisees, a lack of clear policies and guidelines, and inadequate training and support for supervisors. The authors also note that while some universities have attempted to address these challenges by developing supervision policies and training programs, the efforts have often been fragmented and inconsistent. The authors conclude that there is a need for a more coordinated and systematic approach to improving postgraduate supervision in South Africa, including developing clear policies and guidelines, providing training and support for supervisors, and establishing mentorship programs. This article provides a critical examination of postgraduate supervision practices in South Africa.

According to Ismail, Abiddin, and Hassan (2011), supervisee supervision should comprise an “open critical discourse,” which may be achieved over a lengthy time and acknowledge the

significance of accessibility. However, despite the value placed on being accessible as a supervisor, this would often leave the supervisees overwhelmed; with supervisees turning up at various times to discuss their research progress, it will culminate in inefficient time management, which unfavourably influences other aspects of academic involvement. Furthermore, the supervisee must be at the centre of the learning process and for the supervisor to be reachable and identifiable. Graves (1997) identifies the primary issues in supervision as inadequate due to supervisors' limited experience, commitment, and time. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding and communication between supervisors and students and students insufficient knowledge, skills, training, and research method experience. Emotional and psychological challenges include students' feelings of intellectual and social isolation, insecurity about meeting standards, and lack of confidence in completing their theses within the given timeframe or at all. It has also been observed that supervisees may be displeased with their supervisors for the following reasons: inadequate supervision resulting from insufficient time and effort. This stems from supervisors having too many supervisees (David 2020). Also, supervisors were too engaged with attending to many part-time academic posts and other administrative responsibilities alongside their research and teaching duties (Zhou et al. 2010). Other supervisors are inadequately competent and cannot correctly supervise student dissertations (Zhou et al. 2010). Another problem relates to the unclear roles and motives for supervision. In the first instance, supervisory roles are defined as the most advanced level of teaching, mentorship and critical conversation, the attainment of knowledge, joint publications, and recognition, with each consideration requiring different expectations from the supervisees.

However, supervisors' academic growth often lags behind their students. Only educated and senior lecturer cadres can supervise in many Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), but the promotion quota is often limited annually. Also, the disparity between the high number of supervisees and the slow increase of supervisors negatively affects effective supervisor-supervisee relationships, as this is an all-important prerequisite for successful academic supervision (Zhou et al. 2010).

Grant (2010) further stated that many supervisees do not have funding for their research (e.g. lack of academic bursaries), which affects the supervisees' research timeframe because the supervisee takes it as an avenue to work and prolong their research study duration, which is one of the challenges. Consequently, the supervisees do not complete their research in record time and have high drop-out rates. In Europe, the student drop-out rate exceeds 22 per cent in the social sciences and is over 17 per cent in the natural sciences. Challenges in student supervision are evident in dissertation writing, including research topic selection, outlining, and structuring chapters (Xue, Xie, and Qi 2001). Moreover, supervisors may struggle with

different ideas or opinions from their supervisees (Xue et al. 2012). Some supervisors assume parent-like roles, caring for their supervisees in academic and non-academic matters as if they were their biological children (Xu et al. 2012).

Additionally, some supervisors may accommodate students' shortcomings and mistakes to preserve their reputations (Xue et al. 2012). Other issues involve supervisors lacking adequate competence, professional ethics, and temperament and facing challenges related to power and position. High numbers of supervisees can lead to low interaction frequency and inadequate supervision (Zhou et al. 2010). On the part of supervisees, there are cases of insufficient dedication to studies, with some solely interested in the prestige of obtaining additional degrees while engaging in unrelated money-making endeavours (Zhou et al. 2010). Some supervisees may also feel fearful or less confident about discussing their research with supervisors (Zhou et al. 2010), and impoliteness may be observed among certain supervisees.

The desired expectations from supervisees and their supervisors concerning research supervision are enormous. Furthermore, the expectations from supervisors are reduced due to the growing demands of their academic responsibilities. Hence, flexible structures in research education/academic training should be entrenched and strengthened by the extensive use of technology in research (Carr et al. 2010). Additionally, it is expedient to state that the challenges faced by HEIs significantly affect the students' expectations of supervision because of challenges associated with the complexities and changing institutional challenges. Other factors affecting the supervisees during their research supervision include interdisciplinary/trans-disciplinary research and supervision challenges. It is also observed that different career goals of supervisees, which stem from frequently changing employment market dynamics, and the changing nature of the supervisory process play a significant role in this regard. These changes interrupt the majority of the conventional approaches to research education. For instance, traditional academic supervision methods often entail a single supervisor working with a well-prepared supervisee within a fixed timeframe. However, this approach may lead to insufficient supervision due to the supervisor's other academic and administrative obligations.

From the preceding, the study considered it pertinent to clarify the meaning of critical analysis without discouraging the progress of supervisees in their research. It is imperative to elucidate that supervisees must learn to differentiate between criticism and scholarly critique. Scholarly critique permits constructive assessment of a supervisee's research, with the motive of enhancing academic development, while criticism leads to the destruction of work, thereby discouraging the supervisee. Hence, Gottlieb (2017) postulated that supervisors must provide precise feedback to supervisees. Also, the research groups enhance supervisees' quality through the supervisor's critique, encouraging debates and fostering academic synergy among

supervisees (Holmes 2019). According to Sikanadar and Hussain (2018), Participating in an academic research supervision group and reviewing supervisors' critiques among their colleagues enhances the quality of supervisees' research.

In a research conducted by Mansell et al. (2002), 60 per cent of the supervisees were sufficiently equipped or competent for the supervisory process, compared to 40 per cent who were unprepared. This assertion conforms with Saleem and Mehmood (2018), who proposed that research students obtain limited training. Even though there are generic elements associated with the supervision of students' research, such as the structure, ethics of supervision, grammar, content and presentation. These may likely cause apprehension for new supervisors with inadequate capabilities and a lack of experience and knowledge in specific sub-fields of research. According to Maor, Ensor, and Fraser (2016), supervisees view supervisors as specialists and the "cream of the crop" in their chosen disciplines. Hence, they may have high anticipations from them, and henceforth, there is a need for more training for new supervisors to be better equipped in the supervision process (McCulloch et al. 2016). Thus, there is no reason why supervision cannot be incorporated into the training program's academic assessment in the same way that teaching practice is evaluated.

In their study, Dladla and Ndlovu (2019) conduct a literature review on postgraduate supervision practices in South African universities. The authors highlight the vital role of postgraduate supervision in the higher education system, as it profoundly influences the success of postgraduate students and the overall productivity of universities. The authors find a lack of consistency in postgraduate supervision practices across South African universities and several challenges facing the process, including poor communication between supervisors and supervisees, a lack of clear policies and guidelines, and inadequate training and support for supervisors. The authors also note that while some universities have attempted to address these challenges by developing supervision policies and training programs, the efforts have often been fragmented and inconsistent. The authors conclude that there is a need for a more coordinated and systematic approach to improving postgraduate supervision in South Africa, including developing clear policies and guidelines, providing training and support for supervisors, and establishing mentorship programs.

FOSTERING HEALTHY ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR-SUPERVISEE RELATIONSHIPS

Reassessing the roles and qualities of supervisors and their supervisees can enhance the strength of the supervisor-supervisee relationship. The qualities expected by supervisors to be exhibited by their supervisees include the desire to learn, they must be teachable and possess the

necessary skills, initiative, perseverance, and self-discipline. As for supervisees, it is expedient to possess sufficient academic requirements and innovation and be good at adopting new research methods from other disciplines. Additionally, they must be good thinkers and demonstrate significant interest in conducting research activities/services whenever and wherever required. In contrast, supervisors should be well-understood and respected (Zhou et al. 2010). In as much as supervisors must have a sense of direction and innovation and must be systematic, charismatic and influential when and where required, misleading and inadequate research supervision should be avoided.

Further, supervisors are expected to demonstrate academic and charismatic authority, research competence and good interpersonal communication skills. (Zhou et al. 2010). Numerous studies have investigated the dynamic between academic supervisors and supervisees in South Africa. For instance, research indicates that fostering intense and supportive relationships between supervisors and supervisees can improve research quality and increase the likelihood of completing postgraduate degrees (Bacchus and Weideman 2016). Zhou (2016) opined that there must be mutual trust and respect among supervisors and supervisees to succeed in the supervision process.

Further, supervisors need to respect and appreciate the contributions of their supervisees to research progress. Supervisors should also encourage supervisees to think for themselves. On this premise, Taylor (2014) opined that supervisees should be responsible for their academic decisions, but supervisors provide the necessary guidance and teaching. Further, Aspland and O'Donoghue (2017) proposed that all adults are naturally endowed with self-direction; hence supervisees who choose this route desire to study and learn. The research supervision group emphasised using ground rules, which help students and supervisors in their research focus while maintaining research boundaries (Maher et al. 2013).

Figure 2 illustrates the benefits of academic supervision. As an academic supervisor or supervisee, you must continually reflect on your profession or research to gain insight. This can be actualised by reflecting on a challenging situation or positive outcomes. Thus, the supervision process provides quality time and space for reflecting to identify successful research outcomes. Academic supervision can therefore improve the development of research insight and sustain an excellent academic practice. Keeping knowledge and skills relevant to their scope up to date is crucial for effective practice, whether for supervisors or supervisees. Supervision is significant in supporting continuing professional development (CPD) by identifying and addressing learning gaps and ensuring that skills and knowledge remain current. This, in turn, positively influences the career progression of both academic supervisors and supervisees. Academic supervisors must maintain detailed and accurate records of their

supervision activities, including discussions with supervisees, to inform future educational practices. Supervision also has a beneficial impact on supervisees by upholding and elevating practice standards. Cultivating healthy academic supervisor-supervisee relationships creates a supportive environment for reflective practice and open discussion of concerns, helping mitigate stress, anxiety, and burnout. Moreover, such relationships enhance confidence and satisfaction with the supervision process, as they affirm areas of positive practice.

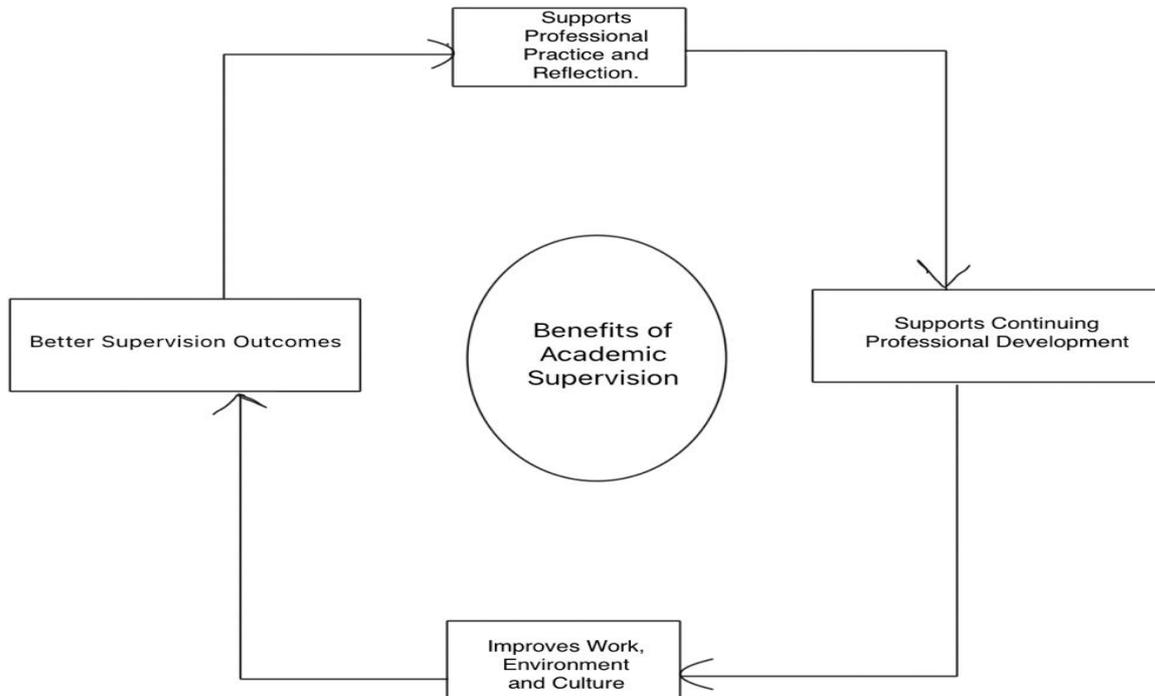


Figure 2: The benefits of academic supervision (Sheu, Kogan, and Hauer 2017)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the fourth industrial revolution era, higher education has experienced significant transformation and numerous opportunities across various domains. Consequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) must promptly respond to the evolving academic landscape, fostering effective and successful research supervision that requires interdisciplinary teaching, innovation, and research. Research supervision holds a central role in the career development of supervisees, necessitating that supervisors be adequately prepared for their supervisory responsibilities. In the South African higher education system, academic supervisors play a crucial role by offering guidance and support to supervisees throughout the research process and beyond. However, supervision in this context also faces challenges that must be addressed to enhance the quality of research. Ensuring the success of postgraduate students and early-career researchers requires supervisors to consider supervision challenges carefully.

Additionally, it is germane to state that three factors ensure research progress: Autonomy – The ability to chart the course of our individual lives; Mastery – the desire for improvement on aspects that matter; and Purpose – the longing to perform obligations in the service. Thus, enhancing supervisees' independence in research poses added capacity-enhancing benefits toward innovations and problem-solving. Mastery encompasses skill improvement and the ability to be highly competent. Hence, it is germane for supervisees to set their own goals rather than imposing mastery goals upon them by their supervisors, as this will culminate in higher productivity levels. Furthermore, it is essential for supervisors to continuously remind their colleagues and supervisees of the purpose and value of their research, as this leads to high motivation levels. Hereafter, supervisors must foster healthy working relationships with their supervisees, which can be achieved through briefings, team meetings, regular catch-ups, and more relaxed environments, such as in the lunch room, over coffee, and at social ceremonies of their research groups. This article adopted the theoretical model to strengthen and support the review. The task of research supervision could be energy-sapping, but investing in healthy relationships with supervisees and research colleagues will pay great dividends in the long run.

The reviewed article recommends that HEIs should offer training initiatives to supervisors, such as academic research groups, which foster theoretical debates, sharing of ideas, addressing challenges and take advice about their supervisees' research progress, if necessary, as this has great potential in the enhancement of the supervision process for supervisors and the supervised. Additionally, enhancing creative and innovative research intensifies a sense of autonomy, and periodic updating of research mandates on the actualisation of institutional vision and mission statements should be significantly encouraged. Furthermore, it is vital to include a workable and realistic timeframe to help supervisors deliver on their supervisory roles and supervisees realise the aim and objectives of their research engagement. Finally, it is relevant to reward diligence in research, and supervisors should endeavour not to judge their supervisees on their potential; instead, the supervisor should evaluate their supervisee's current performance. Further study can be conducted on the relationship and supervision method between the supervisor-supervisee in the developing HEI.

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