



**SUPERVISION CHALLENGES AND DELAYS
IN COMPLETION OF PHD PROGRAMMES IN PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: EXPERIENCES OF SUPERVISORS
AND GRADUATE STUDENTS IN KENYA**

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Abstract:

In the year 2014, the Commission for University Education (CUE), gave a directive that only those with PhD qualifications will be eligible to teach in the Kenyan universities beyond 2018. This was due to the realisation that, majority of the teaching workforce in Universities in Kenya were holders of Masters' Degrees in their respective disciplines. Majority of these lecturers, however, were already enrolled in PhD programmes with some having spent up to eight years, more than the expected period of three to four years.

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The long time it takes to complete PhD studies has psychological, social, and financial implications on the students. It also undermines human resource capacities of the universities in which they teach and should be a concern to all the stakeholders in higher education. One of the main issues often cited for this delay is the challenge of supervision experienced by PhD students as they work with their supervisors on their theses and dissertations. In addition to other issues, this matter is an ethical one demanding critical redress by ethical leadership. This study therefore sought to investigate the supervision challenges encountered by such students in public and private universities in Kenya and strategies that can be put in place to overcome such challenges. Using both primary and secondary data, the study sought to provide answers to three research questions: What are the supervision challenges faced by PhD students in public and private universities in Kenya? What contextual factors have contributed to such challenges? and, What strategies can be employed by students and supervisors to provide quality supervision in a timely manner? The mixed methods design was used to address these research questions drawn from both private and public universities in Kenya after which the collected data was analysed through SPSS presented in both descriptive and regression forms.

Keywords: theses supervision, dissertations, supervisors, PhD studies, Kenya Universities

1. Introduction

The low completion rate of PhDs in Kenyan Universities is a major concern to both students and the Commission for University Education (CUE). It has psychological, social and financial implications on the students as well as the universities especially their capacity to offer quality teaching and research. Several factors have been attributed to such delays in students completing their doctoral studies, including the challenge of supervision of theses/dissertations which is the focus of this study. The quality of supervision is one of the key indicators of an effective PhD programme in any university. Supervisors play a critical role in the lives of students pursuing Doctoral studies as they offer the required individualised support, guidance and mentorship in academic writing. They also provide valuable input to their students on the methodological and theoretical orientations for their work throughout the course of research and writing.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Supervision Challenges faced by PhD students in the Kenyan Universities

Several issues have been discussed in literature with regard to challenges students face in relation to supervision of their doctoral theses or dissertations. One of the crucial issues is feedback from supervisors. In a study by Wadesango et al. (2011) exploring

postgraduate student's experiences in two South African Universities, the researchers found that 75% of the respondents were unhappy with the feedback from their supervisors. This was also the case in the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst and British Council report (DAAD/BC, 2018) in which students complained that supervisors took too long with their work without giving them feedback. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that in some universities, there exist no mechanism to deal with such delays and where they exist, they are not enforced. In the same study however, supervisors raised the concern that students did not keep in touch with them after completing their course work (Wadesango et al., 2011).

The second challenge identified in the study is shortage of qualified supervisors. Some universities, especially the newer ones lack sufficient numbers of staff with PhDs to supervise doctoral students. The study by DAAD/BC revealed that only 40% of lecturers in Kenya have PhD qualifications. This mirrors another study by Clarks and Ausukuya (2013) in Nigeria who found out that only 43% of Lecturers had a PhD qualification. It shows that this is not just a Kenyan situation but a reflection of the African continent's wide reality. According to Shabani, *"One of the major challenges of doctoral education in Africa is that African universities do not have a critical mass of experts able to supervise doctoral theses in all areas of scholarship."* There are also cases where the supervisor does not have sufficient knowledge of the students' research topic and therefore not able to provide constructive guidance to the student (Gunnarsson, Grethe & Annika, 2013).

The issue of back-and-forth encounters between supervisors and supervisees is another challenge which may prolong the time taken by students to complete their work. This impedes the progress of students especially where the supervisors give unclear and sometimes conflicting feedback which often derails or takes the student back to matters that should have been handled before (Ali et al., 2016). The other challenge is poor interpersonal relations between supervisors and their students where some students do not get along with their supervisors because of either personality or ideological differences. For example, Cadwell et al. (2012), conducted a study to investigate supervisory needs among doctoral students in a university teaching hospital setting. The study involved 10 focus groups and used the Delphi method to carry out the research. Findings indicated issues including:

...the challenges of academic medical/scientific writing and career issues for students who are already established in their professions. Other issues identified, common to all doctoral students, include differing expectations between students and supervisors (with students wanting support for their career plans, training in research skills and increasing autonomy and responsibility), supervisor access, quality and frequency of meetings, lack of training in writing and dealing with conflicts (p. 1440).

According to Azure (2016), *"the three most important attributes of supervisors as perceived by graduate students were: supervisors should be friendly, approachable and flexible;*

knowledgeable and resourceful; and encourage students to work and plan independently” (p. 163). When supervisors are not aware or are unavailable to meet students’ expectations and to understand their situations, interpersonal relationships are exacerbated.

There can be tensions in the relationship between students and their supervisors based on the guidance needed versus prescription approaches perceived by students, and finding a suitable balance is not always straightforward. Moreover, in some cases, students have suspected biases and prejudices of supervisors which negatively affect the direction of students’ work. Wadesango et al. (2011) investigated 40 postgraduate students from 2 South African Universities on their experiences with research supervisors. Findings indicated 75% respondents were dissatisfied with their supervisors’ feedback. Respondents indicated reasons including:

...insufficient knowledge of the relevant field, change of supervisors due to transfer to other institutions, lack of supervisory support and supervisor’s other work load . . . Tensions and conflicting perspectives within the supervisory panel, selfishness and disrespectfulness as well as lack of knowledge and expertise in the field of study have been identified as challenges facing some of the post graduate students in this study (p. 33-36).

Moreover, studies have documented the frustrations PhD Students experience when they have more than one supervisor, both giving conflicting feedback or who do not agree with each other’s comments, leaving the student caught in between not knowing which advice to take between the two (Gunnarsson, Grethe & Annika, 2013; Hudson, 2014).

In comparison, supervisors have had diverse sets of expectations of their students. For example, Mudhovozi et al. (2013) explored “*mentors’ views of supervising postgraduate students undertaking research at an institution in Zimbabwe*”. Some mentors reported that they gave support to their mentees. The support included equipping the mentees with research skills, language support, editorial knowledge, providing literature and teamwork (p. 297). Mentees were however reported to have some weakness; the mentees were viewed as “*not proactive, lacked knowledge, lacked English expressive skills, poorly referenced their work, submitted unedited work and used outdated sources. In addition, they struggled to access recent relevant and literature, their work was below postgraduate level and they failed to complete their projects in time*” (p. 298). According to Ali, Watson & Dhingra (2016), who examined 31 students and 77 supervisors (respondents), supervisions factors that determine successful supervision included: “. . . ‘leadership’ (ability to lead the supervision process . . .), ‘knowledge’ (knowledge of a research topic . . .) and ‘support’ (ability to support students in acquiring appropriate research skills . . .) respectively” (pp. 233-236).

Some challenges identified in dissertation supervision are institution based. Institutional factors include; work overload for the graduate faculty members who are meant to supervise the doctoral students (Yousefi, Bazrafkan & Yaman, 2015). Additionally, “*poor staff developments, lack of resources, weak structure of thesis supervision, ambiguity in expertise criteria in supervision, ineffective evaluation*” are institutional based

variables affecting supervision (Yousefi et al., 2015, pp. 93-4). Other institutional issues include:

... lack of scientific and research programmes, lack of specific research line, head of department's influence, student's tendency to choose supervisor with specific position, faculties' disagreement in cooperating with supervisor from out of the university, Unclear responsibility for thesis subject selection, limit for the number of thesis, inappropriate criteria for being a supervisor, undefined tasks for supervisors, lack of supervision bylaws for evaluating supervisors and holding several executive posts by supervisors (Ghadirian et al., 2014, p. 4).

Non-enforcement of supervisory regulations and policies by the University authorities is another institutional challenge that has come up in literature. In the DAAD/BC's (2018) study, it was observed that most universities had policies and regulations on supervision of PhD theses including requirements of number of meetings between students and their supervisors, lead time when feedback is expected from the supervisor once a student hands in their work, and schedules and milestones on submitting progress report to the graduate school. However, the study noted that they were rarely enforced. In some universities, there is no code of ethics to guide the supervision process outlining the respective rights and responsibilities of the supervisors and the students.

2.2 Strategies to Improve Quality of Supervision

Several strategies proposed to deal with the aforementioned challenges include; co-supervision of doctoral students through the use of video-conferencing technology platforms (DAAD/BC, 2018). This may be a challenge in the Kenyan context due to technological constraints, although Skype and other video-conferencing applications can be used. Closely related to this is adopting on-line supervision where the supervisor and the student exchange ideas online limiting face to face meetings to only when they are necessary. Lastly, the use of experts from other research organisations and institutions, with permission from the Board of Postgraduate Studies and senate approval, should be considered seriously (Adeyemo, 2018). This is because there are many staff in these organisations that have PhD qualifications but may not be necessarily attached to any university to offer supervision to PhD students. It calls for closer cooperation between universities and research organisations so that they enter into partnerships which include sharing human resources.

3. Theoretical Underpinning

The study was pegged on two theories: The Mentorship Enactment Theory of Communication and the Expectancy Theory of Motivation.

3.1 Mentorship Enactment Theory

Kalbfleisch's (2002) mentorship enactment theory posits that mentor-protégé relationships require effective communication to initiate, maintain, and repair relationships towards intended outcomes. The theory was the outcome of studies related to proactive communication and personal relationships in organisational settings. For success to be achieved, certain conversational goals and communication strategies need to be employed. The theory advances nine propositions, two of which are applicable in this study as follows:

- Proposition 7: *"The closer a mentor is linked to a protégé's career success, the greater the protégé's communicative attempts to initiate, maintain, and repair a mentoring relationship"* and
- Proposition 9: *"Mentors will be more likely to direct their conversational goals and communication strategies toward maintaining and repairing their relationship when invested in the mentoring relationship"* (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 499).

In relation to dissertation supervision, the supervisor assumes the role of a mentor and the supervisee a protégé. In a relationship where the supervisee is apparently more proactive, sets the communication agenda with the supervisor in the initial stages. The supervisor seemingly responds by being more protective of the relationship because of the level of investment in the relationship. The result is that both the supervisor and supervisee successfully navigate the process of dissertation supervision.

3.2 Expectancy Theory of Motivation

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory stipulates that motivation to put in effort is determined by various factors within an organisation including: individual effort, individual performance, organisational as well as individual goals. In this theory, motivation/effort is likely to be heightened when an individual perceives an opportunity to achieve personal goals within organisational goals especially if there is a possibility of earning organisational rewards as a result of achieving organisational goals. The perceived relationship between personal effort and performance is called expectancy (E), between performance and rewards is instrumentality (I) and between rewards and goal achievement is valence (V) where, according to Vroom, $Motivation/Effort = E \times I \times V$ (Parijat & Bagga, 2019).

With regard to dissertation supervision, when a mentor is able to see how the dissertation supervision process enhances their ability to achieve personal and organisational goals and at the same time receive rewards, such as ranking and promotion, they are motivated to complete the supervision mandates. Similarly, dissertation supervisees, who are mostly employees of other organisations and whose doctoral pursuits are part of career advancement goals, can be more motivated to complete their dissertations when there is a combination of personal and institutional

factors. Effort can be further accelerated where, in their institutions of study, there is recognition, rewards, and organisational goals aligned to their personal goals.

4. Methodology

This study utilised a mixed method design, specifically the descriptive study design. The mixed method analysis was comprised of combining both qualitative and quantitative data for meaningful interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, primarily frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The method of analysing qualitative data followed Creswell, Plano and Clark (2011). A qualitative descriptive methodology was chosen for its clear potential for mixed method triangulation with quantitative data. A qualitative descriptive methodology is best when seeking to provide accurate description and interpretation of data (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

This study was conducted among volunteer sample of current and former colleagues and supervisors to the researchers who work in seven public and private chartered universities. It targeted doctoral supervisors who are currently involved in supervising PhD candidates in writing their dissertations as well as doctoral students who had completed their doctoral work within nine months at the time of the study, and those at various stages in writing their PhD dissertations (theses). The rationale for the choice of study subjects is that effective supervision is a two-way affair, requiring the cooperation of both the supervisor and the student (Steehuis & Bruijn, 2009). It was therefore necessary in this study to get the perspectives of both students and supervisors in order to bring out their experiences as to the challenges and remedies for addressing the challenges.

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, 40 to doctoral supervisors and 60 to dissertation students. Of these, 72 questionnaires were returned comprising a response rate of about 70% which is an acceptable rate. Additionally, nine in-depth interviews were conducted, 3 with supervisors and 4 with students to compliment the questionnaires and bring out the different perspectives of both students and supervisors on supervisory challenges.

The data collection procedure comprised use of a measuring instrument in the form of closed ended questionnaire. It was adopted from Ali et al. (2016) who did a similar study in a university in North England, United Kingdom. It was divided into three sections whereby section one, collected information on doctoral students and supervisors' views on supervision challenges. Section two, sought information on doctoral students and supervisors' views about contextual factors affecting quality supervision. Lastly, section three collected information on doctoral students and supervisors views on ensuring effective supervision. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through an interview protocol which sought information on personal experiences in supervision, causes of delays, competencies required by both doctoral

students and supervisors, challenges caused by doctoral students and supervisors, and their recommendations regarding quality and timely doctoral supervision.

5. Results

The study targeted doctoral supervisors and students from selected public and private universities in Kenya. A total of 72 questionnaires were properly filled and returned for analysis. Out of this, 45 were doctoral students while 27 were doctoral supervisors from nine conveniently sampled universities that were included in the study. The response rate of 72% was therefore considered adequate to carry out the analysis and make conclusions.

5.1 Demographic Information

The respondents were requested to indicate whether they were doctoral supervisors or students. The results were as presented in Figure 1.

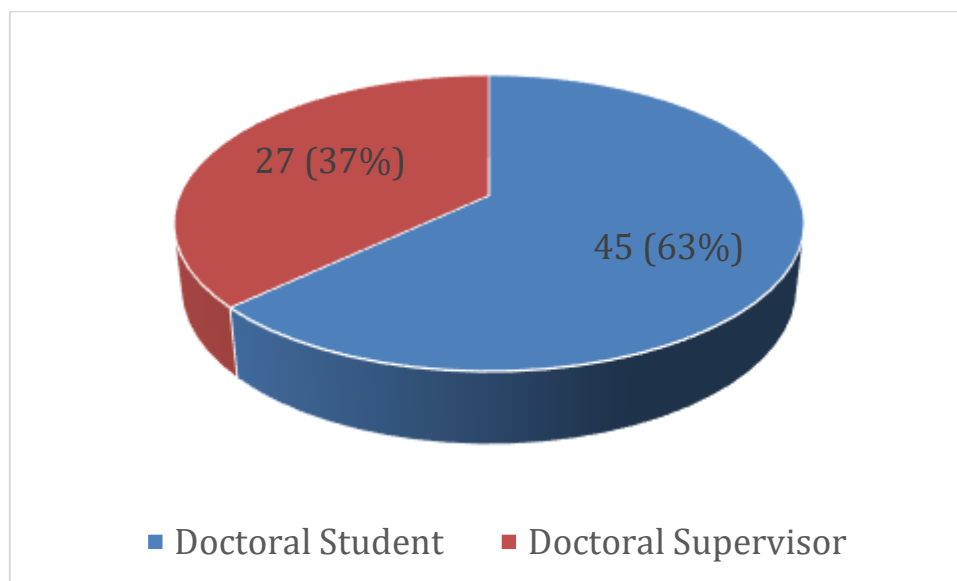


Figure 1: Position of the respondents

The results in Figure 1 indicate that 45 (63%) of the respondents were doctoral students while 27 (37%) of the respondents were doctoral supervisors. Further, respondents were asked to state their gender and outcomes were as shown in Figure 2.

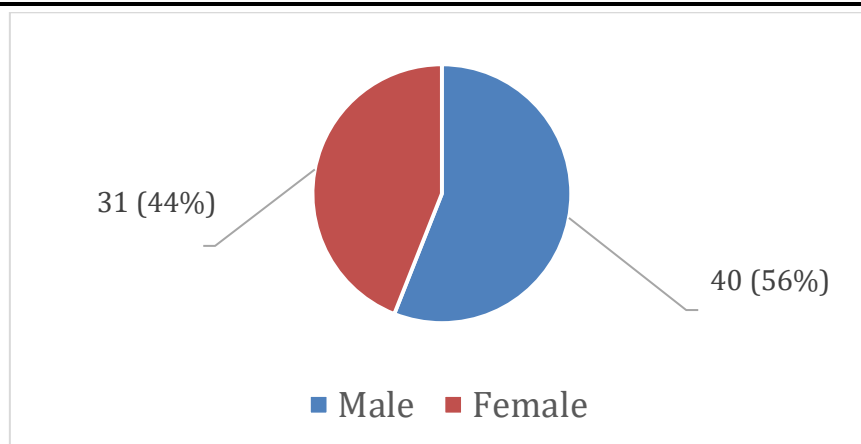


Figure 2: Gender of respondents

As depicted in Figure 2 the results indicate that 40 (56%) of the respondents were male while 31 (44%) were female. This shows that the number of male participants were higher than the female respondents. There is an implication that the academic arena is more surrounded by more men than women.

In addition, respondents were asked to provide responses regarding supervising period (supervisors), period under supervision (students) and indicate their age (both students and supervisors). Results were as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive summary

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supervising period	24	0.5	30	6.188	5.9906
Period under supervision	42	0.25	7.5	2.6607	1.8436
Age	71	34	70	47.7	9.369

Based on the findings presented in Table 1, many of the supervisors indicated that they had been supervising PhD students for about six years (mean = 6.188). However, there were those who had only supervised PhD students for only 6 months. However, some have supervised PhD students for up to 30 years.

Further, many of the students indicated that they have been under supervision of their supervisor(s) for an average of two and half years (mean = 2.6). However, there were those who had been under the supervision of their supervisor(s) for only three months. On the other hand, some had been under the supervision of their supervisor(s) for almost eight years.

In addition, many respondents were found to be 48 years old on average (mean = 47.7), with the youngest being 34 years and the oldest being 70 years.

5.2 Supervision challenges faced by PhD students in Kenyan universities

The respondents (doctoral students) were asked to give their perspective regarding supervision challenges faced by PhD students in Kenyan universities. Their perspectives

were rated as follows: 1 very great extent, 2 great extent, 3 moderate extent, 4 small extent, 5 very small extent. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' perspective on supervision challenges

Supervision Challenges from Students' Perspective	Mean	Standard Deviation
Supervisor lacks adequate knowledge on the student research topic	3.69	1.20
There is often conflicting feedback from the different supervisors	3.11	1.17
Poor interpersonal relationships between supervisor and student	3.62	1.32
Inadequate emotional support by the supervisor	3.49	1.33
Supervisor takes too long before giving feedback	2.76	1.43
Supervisor not readily accessible	3.18	1.34
Students and supervisors have differing expectations about supervision.	3.24	1.30
Change of supervisor mid-course	3.91	1.26
Tensions and conflicting perspectives within the supervisory panel	3.47	1.31
Supervisor is unfriendly	3.73	1.47
Supervisor not flexible (wants things done his way)	3.22	1.46
Supervisor not readily available	3.42	1.25
Average score	3.40	1.32

Based on the findings in Table 2, the average score of 3.4 indicated that many doctoral students felt that the above-mentioned supervision challenges are present but to a moderate extent. However, students felt to a small extent that supervisors lack adequate knowledge on the research topic (mean = 3.69), there is poor interpersonal relationships between supervisor and student (mean = 3.62) and change of supervisor mid-course (mean = 3.91).

The doctoral supervisors were further asked to give their perspective about supervision challenges faced by PhD students in Kenyan universities. Their perspectives were rated as follows: 1 very great extent, 2 great extent, 3 moderate extent, 4 small extent, 5 very small extent. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Supervisors' Perspective Supervision Challenges

Supervision Challenges from Supervisors' Perspective	Mean	Standard Deviation
Students disappear in the course of supervision	2.96	1.08
Some students are incompetent	3.23	1.14
Students are too dependent on the supervisor	3.00	1.10
Students do not respond to feedback in good time	2.69	1.19
Students are not able to work independently	3.38	0.98
Students not knowledgeable about the standards expected	2.81	1.10
Students should positively accept and address shortcomings of their work and progress	2.27	1.12
Students do not have adequate writing skills for PhD level work	2.85	1.05
Students lack adequate research skills	3.08	1.02
Students have not adequately read literature on the research topic	2.77	0.91
Student do not adhere to deadlines for submitting work as agreed with their supervisor	2.77	1.03

Students are not self-driven	3.12	0.95
Students face challenge of time due to other responsibilities like work and family	1.69	0.84
Average Score	2.82	1.04

From the findings in Table 3, the average score of 2.82 indicated that many of the doctoral supervisors felt that the above-mentioned supervision challenges are present but to a moderate extent. However, supervisors to a great extent felt that students should positively accept and address shortcomings of their work and progress (mean = 2.27), and students face a challenge of time due to other responsibilities like work and family (mean = 1.69).

5.3 Contextual Factors that have Contributed to Dissertation Supervision Challenges

The study sought doctoral students' and supervisors' views about contextual factors affecting quality of supervision. The responses were rated as follows: 1 very great extent, 2 great extent, 3 moderate extent, 4 small extent, 5 very small extent. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Contextual Factors

Contextual Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
Supervisors have other responsibilities apart from supervision	1.70	0.85
Supervisors have heavy supervision workload due to shortage of qualified supervisors	1.92	0.98
Lack of supervision regulation for evaluating the supervisory of supervisors	2.55	1.14
Non-enforcement of supervisory regulations	2.48	0.98
No code of ethics guiding supervision process	3.36	1.10
Undefined tasks for supervisors	3.37	1.15
Insufficient training on effective supervision	3.11	1.22
Resource constraints to hire and pay supervisors	2.23	1.35
Weak structure of thesis supervision	2.86	1.15
Ineffective monitoring and evaluation of supervision	2.61	1.20
Inefficient communication	2.95	1.19
Poor leadership of board of graduate school	3.06	1.38
Average score	2.74	1.15

From the findings in Table 4, the average score of 2.74 indicated that majority of the respondents (doctoral students and supervisors) felt that the above-mentioned contextual factors have to a moderate extent contributed towards supervision challenges. Further, the respondents felt to a great extent that supervisors have other responsibilities apart from supervision (mean = 1.7), supervisors have heavy supervision workload due to shortage of qualified supervisors (1.92), non-enforcement of supervisory regulations (mean=2.48), and resource constraints to hire and pay supervisors (mean = 2.23).

5.4 Strategies that can be Employed by Students and Supervisors to Provide Quality Supervision in a Timely Manner

Doctoral students' and supervisors were asked to give their views about ensuring effective supervision. The responses were rated as follows: 1 very great extent, 2 great extent, 3 moderate extent, 4 small extent, 5 very small extent. Table 5 presents results on what supervisors should do to ensure effective supervision.

Table 5: What Supervisors should do

Supervisors' responsibilities	Mean	Standard Deviation
Show an interest in the students' research	1.68	1.00
Provide critical feedback on student written work in good time	1.60	0.83
Encourage the student to present their work at seminars/conferences	1.79	0.95
Be knowledgeable about the standards expected	1.64	0.87
Be approachable/friendly	1.57	0.77
Provide assistance in orientating the student towards appropriate behavior in the oral examination	1.81	0.90
Be available whenever the student needs help with their research	1.94	0.99
Help the student develop their writing	2.04	1.06
Give the student information about appropriate meetings, conferences and training opportunities	1.89	1.05
Be knowledgeable about the student's research topic	1.66	0.84
Ensure that the student meets deadlines	1.98	1.01
Be an active researcher	1.64	0.85
Ensure all practical arrangements are made for the oral examination, including liaison with examiners	1.91	0.97
Be a good role model to the student	1.45	0.69
Ensure that the student acquire appropriate specialist research and generic skills	1.94	1.09
Give detailed advice and set deadlines for the submission of reports and parts of the thesis	1.70	0.93
Ensure that any student whose first language is not English is given the opportunity to get help to develop English language skills	2.23	1.20
Have leadership skills	1.89	0.89
Ensures that supervision records are written, agreed and subsequently filed	1.79	0.93
Be accessible outside appointment times when the student needs help	2.34	1.15
Continually motivates the student	1.96	1.02
Ensure that the student has attended relevant training to identify and address personal and professional skill requirements	2.43	1.30
Average Score	1.86	0.97

Results in Table 5 indicate an average score of 1.86, implying that many of the respondents felt that to a great extent, if supervisors were to implement the above-mentioned items then, this would ensure effective supervision. Further, respondents felt

to a very great extent that supervisors should be good role models to the students (mean = 1.45).

In addition, doctoral students' and supervisors were asked to give their views about ensuring effective supervision. The responses were rated as follows: 1 very great extent, 2 great extent, 3 moderate extent, 4 small extent, 5 very small extent. Table 6 presents results on what students should do to ensure effective supervision.

Table 6: What Students should do

Students responsibilities	Mean	Standard Deviation
Be knowledgeable about the standards expected	1.35	0.56
Positively accept and address shortcomings of their work and progress	1.27	0.53
Be keen to present their work at seminars/conferences	1.42	0.64
Be able to work independently	1.46	0.71
Be proactive	1.38	0.50
Ensure that the research is manageable in the time available	1.73	0.60
Seek assistance in orientation towards appropriate behavior in the oral examination	1.77	0.77
Share research interests with supervisor	1.46	0.65
Seek supervisor's availability whenever in need of help with their research	1.50	0.65
Seek help to develop writing skills	1.58	0.64
Have good verbal communication skills	1.65	0.69
Request supervisor for information about appropriate meetings, conferences and training opportunities	1.73	0.92
Be knowledgeable about the research topic	1.35	0.63
Ensure that deadlines are met	1.23	0.59
Be an active researcher	1.31	0.55
Ensure adequate preparation for the oral examination	1.23	0.51
Ensure good writing skills	1.23	0.43
Seek supervisor's help in choosing the research topic	1.88	0.82
Seek supervisor's assistance to acquire appropriate specialist research and generic skills	2.00	0.80
Give detailed advice and set deadlines for the submission of reports and parts of the thesis	1.92	1.09
Ensure that if first language is not English help is sort to develop written English language skills	1.77	0.99
Have self-leadership skills	1.93	0.94
Ensure that supervision records are written, agreed and subsequently filed	1.82	1.09
Be accessible outside appointment times when the supervisor needs to interact with student	1.75	0.80
Continually updates the supervisor on progress	1.25	0.44
Ensure to attend various relevant training to identify and address personal and professional skill requirements	1.39	0.63
Average Score	1.55	0.70

The findings as shown in Table 6 above indicate an average score of 1.55, implying that the majority of the respondents felt that to a great extent, if students were to implement the above-mentioned items then, this would ensure effective supervision. Further, the respondents felt to a very great extent that, students should be knowledgeable about the standards expected (mean = 1.35); positively accept and address shortcomings of their work and progress (mean = 1.27); be keen to present their work at seminars/conferences (mean = 1.42); be able to work independently (mean = 1.46); be proactive (mean = 1.38); share research interests with supervisor (mean = 1.46); be knowledgeable about the research topic (mean = 1.35); ensure that deadlines are met (mean = 1.23); be active researchers (mean = 1.31); ensure adequate preparation for the oral examination (mean = 1.23); ensure good writing skills (mean = 1.23); continually update supervisors on progress (mean = 1.25); and ensure they attend various relevant training to identify and address personal and professional skill requirements (mean = 1.39).

6. Discussion

Doctoral completion rates have been an international discussion topic for many years. Non-completion of any degree and especially a doctoral degree is very expensive for individuals, families, and countries. Delays in completion of PhD programmes continue to hamper many would-be graduates to progress in their careers. Candidacy can be defined as that period in a doctoral student's studies when he or she is said to be ready to undertake independent and original research which culminates into a dissertation (PhD). This seems to be where the bulk of delay happens.

Majority of doctoral students felt that supervision challenges were present but to a moderate extent. Students also felt to a small extent that supervisors lacked adequate knowledge on the students' research topic and there was poor interpersonal relationship between supervisors and students. In addition, a change of supervisor mid-course was also a challenge.

The results further revealed that most of the doctoral supervisors felt that supervision challenges were present but to a moderate extent. However, they felt to a great extent that students should positively accept and address shortcomings of their work and progress, and students face the challenge of time due to other responsibilities like work and family.

The findings further indicated that the majority of the respondents (doctoral students and supervisors) felt that the contextual factors identified in the study had to moderate extent contributed towards supervision challenges. Further, they felt to a great extent that supervisors had other responsibilities apart from supervision. They had heavy supervision workload due to shortage of qualified supervisors, non-enforcement of supervisory regulations, and resource constraints to hire and pay supervisors.

Further, results indicated that many of the respondents felt that to a great extent, supervisors should be good role models to the students. On the other hand, students

should be knowledgeable about the standards expected, positively accept and address shortcomings of their work and progress; be keen to present their work at seminars/conferences; be able to work independently; be proactive; share research interests with supervisor; be knowledgeable about the research topic; ensure that deadlines are met; be active researchers; ensure adequate preparation for the oral examination; ensure good writing skills; continually update the supervisor on progress; and ensure to attend various relevant training to identify and address personal and professional skill requirements.

There is a need to further investigate differences in completion among candidates enrolling in different disciplines which has been researched in other countries. Research could also explore methods of enhancing the advisor/advisee relationship and more training of student supervision to student supervisors. Other factors like students having scholarships need exploring.

7. Conclusion

The study sought to analyse the supervision challenges and delays in completion of PhD programmes in public and private universities in Kenya, focusing on the experiences of both supervisors and doctoral students. It identified several bottlenecks in the supervision process both from the students' and the supervisors' perspectives. It also brought out several contextual factors that have contributed to such challenges as well as strategies that can be used in resolving such challenges. Based on the findings, the study recommends that universities in Kenya should create (where they are non-existent) and strictly enforce policies for successful dissertation supervision. They also need to address the issue of capacity regarding the number of supervisors vis-à-vis the students enrolled for PhD programmes and only admit students where they have adequate number and competent faculty to supervise the dissertations. Supervisors should only accept manageable supervision workload considering the other responsibilities they have in the university so that they have time to effectively guide and mentor the students they are supervising. On the other hand, supervisees ought to be more proactive by regularly consulting their supervisors and where feedback from supervisor has delayed beyond agreed or acceptable time frame, seek redress from university authorities. Finally, there is a need for the Commission of University Education to review the regulation on student-staff ratios by universities and robustly enforce the guidelines on the number of students a supervisor can supervise at any one time. However, more studies need to be done in order to develop data-based policies and strategies to deal with the issues.

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