

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**INFLUENCE OF STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP ON
THESIS COMPLETION IN INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION (IEPA)**



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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INFLUENCE OF STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP ON THESIS
COMPLETION IN INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND
ADMINISTRATION, UCC (IEPA)



Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration,
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award of Master of Philosophy degree in Administration in Higher Education.

NOVEMBER 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research and no part of it has been presented for another degree in the university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name: DINAH ADJOA OTOO

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: DR. FRANCIS ANSAH

ABSTRACT

This study adopted a concurrent mixed method approach to examine the influence of student-supervisor relationship on thesis completion. The study population, totaling 123, consisted of MPhil cohorts within a 5year period and supervisors of the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), UCC. A census of all the student's population totaling 107 was used whilst 9 MPhil thesis supervisors were purposively sampled. The data from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations), inferential statistics (binary logistic regression and Pearson product-moment correlation) whilst interview responses were transcribed and analysed thematically. The findings indicated that student-supervisor relationship particularly a supportive supervisory relationship was more likely to influence thesis completion on time. The study also revealed that both students and supervisors had some expectations from each other which determined the nature of the supervisory relationship they had. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that a supportive supervisory, clear statement of expectations at the initial stage of the thesis process could enhance thesis completion in IEPA.

KEYWORDS

Supervisory Relationship

Masters' Degree

Masters Student

Supervisor

Timely Completion

Thesis Supervision

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DEDICATION

To my family

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
KEYWORDS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ACRONYMS	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	5
Hypotheses	5
Significance of the Study	5
Delimitation	6
Limitations	6
Definition of Terms	7
Organization of the Study	8
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
Introduction	9
Concept of Postgraduate Supervision	9

Supervision Pedagogy	9
Supervision as a Pedagogical Tool	9
The Role of Supervision Pedagogy	10
The Nature of Postgraduate Supervision	11
Models of Supervision	11
The Professional-Apprentice Model	11
Panel Supervision Model	12
Group Supervision Model	13
Supervisory Approaches in Postgraduate Supervision	14
Laissez Faire Approach	14
Directive Approach	15
Contractual Approach	15
Pastoral Approach	15
Postgraduate Supervisory Relationship	16
Developing and Maintaining the Student-Supervisor Relationship	16
The Role of a Supervisor	18
The Role of a Masters' Student	19
Conducive Environment for the Student-Supervisor Relationship	20
Expectations of the Student-Supervisor Relationship	21
Expectations of MPhil Students in the Supervisory Relationship	21
Expectations of Thesis Supervisors in the Supervisory Relationship	23
Experiences of the Supervisory Process	24
Experiences of Master Students in the Supervisory Process	24
Experiences of the Supervisor in the Supervisory Process	25
Negotiating the Student-Supervisor Relationship	26

Perceptions of the Student-Supervisor Relationship in the	
Successful Completion of Master's Studies	29
Theoretical Framework	32
Interpersonal Perspective Theory	33
The Nested Contexts Framework	35
Empirical Review	37
Student-Supervisor Relationship Influencing Masters' Thesis	
Completion	37
Experiences of Students in Students-Supervisor Relationship	38
Conceptual Framework	39
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Overview	42
Research Design	42
Study Area	43
The Population of the Study	44
Sample and Sampling Procedure	45
Data Collection Instruments	46
Questionnaire for Students	46
Questionnaire for Supervisors	47
Pilot Testing of Research Instrument	47
Reliability of Instruments	47
Data Collection Procedure	48
Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation	49
Ethical Issues	51

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction	52
Bio Data of Respondents	52
Study Duration of Students	53
Research Question 1: What is the nature of student-supervisor relationship at IEPA?	54
Research Question 2: What are students' expectations of supervisors during thesis supervision at IEPA	56
Research Question 3: What are supervisors' expectations of students during thesis supervision at IEPA?	59
Research Question 4: To What Extent Does the Student-Supervisor Relationship Influence Thesis Completion?	62
Research Question 5: What are the challenges faced by students and supervisors during thesis supervision?	65
Research Question 6: How are the challenges faced by students and supervisors during thesis writing managed?	74

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction	80
Overview of the Study	80
Key Findings	82
Conclusions	84
Recommendations	84
Suggestions for Further Studies	86
REFERENCES	87

APPENDICES	109
APPENDIX A: Questionnaire for MPhil students	109
APPENDIX B: Questionnaire for Supervisors	115
APPENDIX C: Ethical clearance	120

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Study Population	45
2 Reliability of various constructs of the questionnaire	48
3 Research questions, level of measurement and method of analysis	50
4 Number of years spent in school	53
5 Decision Rule for the Cut -off means	53
6 Nature of student supervisor relation at the IEPA	54
7 Cross-tabulation of student-supervisor relationship by sex	55
8 Students' expectations of supervisors during thesis writing	57
9 Expectations of supervisors from students during the thesis writing stage	60
10 Timely thesis completion among masters' students at IEPA	63
11 Relationship between student-supervisor relationship and early thesis completion	64
12 Regression Coefficients for student-supervisor relationship on early thesis completion	65

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Circumplex model for interpersonal behaviour (Leary, 1957, p. 65).	33
2	The model for interpersonal supervisor behaviour (Mainhard et al., 2009), p. 363), adopted from (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005).	35
3	Nested context influencing retention and completion	36
4	Influence of student-supervisor relationship on MPhil thesis completion	40

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CES	College of Education Studies
CGS	Council of Graduate Schools
IEPA	Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
MPHIL	Master of Philosophy
SGS	School of Graduate Studies
UCC	University of Cape Coast

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Findings from (Jones, 2013; Grant, Hackney & Edgar, 2014; Seidu, 2015) asserts that the nature of supervision students receive from their supervisors during thesis writing is key to the timely completion of the thesis. However, there seems to be a paucity of literature to this assertion. Using the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, UCC as a case, this study examined the supervisory relationship between MPhil students and thesis supervisors with the view to understand how the relationship influences their timely completion of thesis in attainment of master's degree.

Background to the Study

There has been a proliferation of postgraduate degree programs in universities worldwide to equip students with essential knowledge and skills to drive societal development (Chidi & Sylvia, 2020). In partial attainment of the mandated 2 years master's degree, students are required to complete a research project often known as a thesis or dissertation depending on the program demands in addition to the course work which serves as a core component for the award of a full degree (UCC Graduate School Students' Handbook, 2016).

A study by Akparep et al. (2017), however reveals that many research students do not complete their thesis on time. Some students drop out of school without completing the thesis, leaving them with no formal credentials (Amehoe & Botha, 2013). Some studies in the United States of America reveals that completion rates differed from major disciplines, with natural sciences recording the highest compared to humanities (Gardner, 2008). The high completion rate in sciences was attributed to how students related and

connected with supervisors particularly through laboratory sessions, as opposed to the research isolation found in humanities.

This situation is no different in Ghana as Seidu (2015) asserts that a lot of masters' students face delays in finishing their theses, primarily due to unfavourable student-supervisor dynamics. In order to accomplish its goals, the connection must be carefully managed. Supervising postgraduate students through completing their theses is one of the essential responsibilities of academics. Successful thesis completion within program term requires a strong student-supervisor interaction. Supervisors provide technical assistance to research students during their thesis writing process (Rugut, 2017).

Supervisors are typically chosen on the basis of their competence and interest in a field of study (Buttery, Richter & Filho, 2015). Studies have revealed that supervisors' preference for certain roles in student guidance over others, as well as ambiguous supervision goals and objectives, are factors contributing to thesis completion delays (Wallace, 2003; Vilkinas, 2002). A student's relationship with their supervisor begins when the supervisor is assigned to them. The partnership should be based on established concepts, rules, and regulations. The interaction shouldn't be limited to "pass your thesis and go away," as Seidu (2015) noted. He believed that, among other things, relationships between students and supervisors that continue past the thesis are frequently advantageous for academic advancement.

Bourke et al. (2004) found that only 10-20% of postgraduates graduate within specified timeframe. Research conducted by Baafi-Frimpong (1998) at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) revealed that only 24 (11.4%) of 210 regular postgraduate students enrolled in the 1993/94 academic year

completed and presented their theses within three to four years. Two decades later, despite interventions such as the 2013 step-down policy, the completion rate of MPhil students remained a concern, as highlighted by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, U.C.C. in 2014.

Statement of the Problem

According to Akparep et al. (2017), a common feature of the Ghanaian educational system is that many research students take longer to complete their degrees than the curriculum allows. The non-completion rate is overly high, sometimes exceeding 50%, while those that persist take a lengthy time to complete their postgraduate studies, approximately more than six years instead of the projected two for a master of philosophy (MPhil) degree (Ayiro & Sang, 2011). The issue of completion rate has been a source of concern, as this has led to some studies on factors accounting for this menace. However, Anderson et al. (2008) asserts that the relationship students have with their supervisors is essential in postgraduate education.

Most research on supervisor- student relationships in Ghana have focused on the causes of thesis completion delays among Ghanaian postgraduate students. For instance, Amehoe and Botha (2013) studied the postgraduate throughput at the University of Ghana. They discovered that the late completion of theses by students was due to the late assignment of supervisors, inadequate financial support for postgraduate research, inadequate theoretical preparation for research, students combining work and academics, delay in the approval of research topics for students, and age and marital status of students. In addition, Akparep et al. (2017) investigated the reasons why research students were not graduating on time at University for Development

Studies and discovered that too many students assigned to supervisors, students' combining work with studies ,among others accounted for thesis delay and graduation.

Furthermore, Osei et al. (2017) analyzed the trend of postgraduate students' admission, enrollment, and completion at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and found that the completion rate was low compared to the admission rate. The study found that household issues, financial constraints, and thesis and examination issues contributed to the low completion rate. Moreover, Essuman (2020) found that at the University of Cape Coast, specifically the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), Master's students often fail to graduate within the stipulated timeframe due to various challenges, including personal attributes and commitments, marital, family, or health issues, employment and financial constraints, and pressures on supervisors' time.

Additionally, supervisors' styles of supervision and competing commitments also contribute to delayed completion, hindering students' timely graduation and supervisors' perception about students' progress. Limited research has, however, exclusively examined the nature of the supervisor-student relationship during the thesis phase and how this relationship affects thesis completion at the IEPA. Meanwhile ,studies by (Galt, 2013; Hassan et al., 2009; Hodza, 2008; Jones, 2013; Kiley, 2011; McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Temmerman, 2015) indicates that the student-supervisor relationship influences graduate-level (MPhil) thesis completion. This study sought to bridge the knowledge gap by examining the influence of student-supervisor relationship on MPhil thesis completion at IEPA.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to examine student-supervisor relationship's influence on completion.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What type of student-supervisor relationships exist at IEPA?
2. What are student expectations of the student-supervisor relationship during thesis supervision at IEPA?
3. What are supervisor expectations of the student-supervisor relationship during thesis supervision at IEPA?
4. To what extent does the student-supervisor relationship contribute to the timely completion of thesis at IEPA?
5. What are the challenges faced by students and supervisors in the student-supervisor relationship during thesis writing?
6. How do students and supervisors deal with the challenges they face in student-supervisor relationships during thesis writing?

Hypotheses

1. H_0 : Student-supervisor relationships do not have a statistically significant effect on timely thesis completion at IEPA.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will contribute to the paucity of literature in the field of education and related disciplines by enabling a better understanding of the postgraduate student-supervisor relationship in Ghanaian universities, which will improve thesis writing and timely completion. It will also inform the management of IEPA to make informed decisions on

allocating supervisors and monitoring faculty in the administration of supervisory roles.

The study's outcomes will improve postgraduate research experiences and inform sponsorship decisions. Findings will be shared through presentations, peer-reviewed publications, and targeted dissemination to stakeholders, including IEPA, policymakers, and prospective MPhil students.

Delimitation

The study is limited to regular MPhil students at IEPA of the University of Cape Coast since regular MPhil students at IEPA spend a minimum of one year with their supervisors working on their theses, which is sufficient time for supervisors to have a substantial influence and contribution to their students' theses. Also, these cohorts were purposively selected because they enrolled in their respective programs (2-6years) after various interventions including step-down policy ensures timely completion.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study is the sampling method and data collection procedure. The researcher had to use a census of all the student's population because of the need for the divergent views of the various year groups and the population being relatively small, however because almost all the participants had completed either completed their program or their course work component, majority were accessible only on their WhatsApp platforms which warranted the use of google form link to administer questionnaire. This posed a challenge as most participants were reluctant to respond to the questionnaire at the initial. The challenge was alleviated by reaching out to the course reps to explain to the participants the need for the researcher to be added

to their respective pages to aid easy access to each participant after the researcher had explained the need for each participants view. This made the data collection process also time consuming.

Also, this study exclusively focused on regular Masters students. The research might have been expanded to include doctoral students, to broaden the scope of the study. This would have helped to better appreciate the postgraduate supervision process.

My dual role as an MPhil student of IEPA presented potential biases, but strict adherence to research ethics and objectivity ensured the integrity of the study.

Definition of Terms

To ensure precision, the following definitions are provided to clarify terms used in this study.

Masters' student: A student pursuing a master's program in any field. (MPhil/Mcom/Med/MBA/MA). In this study master student refers to MPhil students

Completion Rate: Percentage of students completing their program within two years, relative to their cohort.

Supervisor: A university lecturer designated to provide expert guidance, mentorship, and academic oversight to research students.

Timely completion: Completing MPhil within the university's stipulated 2-year timeframe.

Student-supervisor relationship -A supervisory relationship throughout thesis writing to degree completion.

Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research background, problem statement, objectives, hypotheses, and research questions, as well as significance, limitations, and organization.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature, theoretical frameworks, concepts, and empirical studies. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including design, sampling, data collection, and analysis.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the study's results. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes key findings, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature to establish a theoretical framework for addressing the research questions.

Concept of Postgraduate Supervision

Postgraduate supervision is when a master's student's success hinges on effective supervision, which cultivates critical thinking, logical reasoning, and quality thesis writing (Alam et al., 2013). A strong supervisory relationship ensures timely completion (Galt, 2013; Jones, 2013), with the supervisor's primary goal being academic development (Hodza, 2008). The subsequent sections explore postgraduate supervision's pedagogical aspects and fundamental nature.

Supervision Pedagogy

Supervision pedagogy, according to Firth & Martens (2008), focuses on the educational process by integrating supervision into a dynamic collaborative framework, where master's students and their supervisors engage in reciprocal teaching and learning. This partnership is characterized by two essential elements: instruction and active participation. The subsequent sections will delve into two critical dimensions of supervision pedagogy, namely: supervision as a pedagogical approach and the significance of supervision pedagogy in facilitating effective student-supervisor relationships.

Supervision as a Pedagogical Tool

Postgraduate supervision is an advanced teaching methodology that promotes knowledge creation and scholarly growth (Emilsson & Johnsson,

2007). Effective supervision involves specialized roles, responsibilities, and a reciprocal pedagogical approach (Firth & Martens, 2008; Gill & Burnard, 2008). This includes teaching research skills, ethical considerations, and data analysis, with interactive learning environments yielding better outcomes (Walker & Thomson, 2010).

The Role of Supervision Pedagogy

Master's research supervision involves teaching students' essential skills to navigate their projects efficiently. The supervisor's approach significantly impacts this process, with two primary styles emerging: hands-on guidance and hands-off autonomy. The hands-on approach provides close direction, ensuring timely completion, while the hands-off style suits independent and self-assured students but may lead to delays.

Effective supervision pedagogy facilitates timely postgraduate study completion by fostering collaborative student-supervisor relationships, progressive research writing development, and regular progress monitoring. This approach helps students stay on track, overcome challenges, and produce quality research. By doing so, supervisors play a crucial role in ensuring students complete their studies within the allotted timeframe.

Prompt completion is vital, as delays increase education costs and undermine the effectiveness of postgraduate programs. Funding agencies emphasize the importance of efficient study completion, highlighting the need for supervisors to adopt effective pedagogical strategies. By striking the right balance between guidance and autonomy, supervisors can empower master's students to succeed and complete their studies on schedule.

The Nature of Postgraduate Supervision

The primary objective of postgraduate supervision is to foster the development of master's students into autonomous scholars. In pursuit of this goal, supervisors and institutions have continually sought to refine and improve the quality of postgraduate supervision. Various supervision approaches have been employed to deliver high-quality guidance and support for MPhil students. This section will explore two key aspects of postgraduate supervision in higher education: supervision models and supervisory practices, with a focus on their impact on enhancing the postgraduate learning experience.

Models of Supervision

Supervision models refer to the forms of supervision and include the roles and nature of the interaction between the student and the supervisor (de Beer & Mason, 2009). In postgraduate studies, there are various supervision models, including the professional-apprentice, panel-supervision, and group supervision models.

The Professional-Apprentice Model

The traditional supervisor-apprentice model is a personalized approach to supervision, characterized by a one-on-one relationship between student and supervisor (Mackinnon, 2004; McCallin & Nayar, 2012). This individualized model pairs a professional academic with a student, fostering independent research skills through guidance and mentorship. Regular meetings enable the supervisor to coach and monitor the student's progress, providing tailored support. The face-to-face interactions facilitate nuanced discussions,

clarification of complex concepts, and effective communication through nonverbal cues (de Beer & Mason, 2009).

However, the model's effectiveness can be compromised when supervisors' administrative and academic burdens limit regular interaction and instruction, potentially delaying study completion (McCallin & Nayar, 2012). To ensure success, supervisors must strike a balance between their workload and student needs. Despite this challenge, the traditional supervisor-apprentice model remains a valuable approach to developing independent research skills, offering a unique opportunity for personalized guidance and mentorship.

Panel Supervision Model

The panel supervision model is a form of supervision in which two or more supervisors oversee a student's research project together (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). A team of co-supervisors are normally appointed based on their experience in a particular study area to supervise a student (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). In the panel, a principal supervisor is in charge of guiding the research project and assuring the quality of supervision. Effective co-supervision requires a clear understanding of the roles and contributions of each supervisor, with the primary supervisor leading the collaboration (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). This collaborative approach to supervision has emerged as a valuable alternative to traditional supervision models, as it brings diverse expertise to the research project, enhancing its quality and outcomes. By sharing responsibilities and leveraging individual strengths, co-supervisors can provide comprehensive support and guidance to students, fostering a richer research experience and various perspectives (James & Baldwin, 1999).

The strength of this model lies in its multi-perspective evaluation, where students benefit from constructive input from multiple supervisors, promoting thorough enhancement of their research outcomes and allows the supervisors to learn from one another (Grossman & Crowther, 2015; James & Baldwin, 1999). However, the model may disadvantage the student if the supervisors differ regarding the research project (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). Amid the debate, it is possible for the student to become confused, especially when supervisors give the student opposing recommendations (James, & Baldwin, 1999).

Group Supervision Model

This is a recently introduced methodology that encourages generating knowledge in postgraduate education research (Nelson Mandela University et al., 2011). It is a model that numerous institutions use nowadays for the MPhil research procedure (Bitzer et al., 2018). Unlike the conventional one-on-one supervision approach, this model brings together students at similar stages of their studies to form a collective learning community, fostering peer support and shared academic growth (Bitzer et al., 2018). The cohort model of supervision offers numerous benefits, fostering an academic community where students collaborate and share diverse perspectives to enhance their research projects (Nelson Mandela University et al., 2011). Supervisors contribute their expertise, complementing one another to enrich the learning experience. This model promotes academic development, intellectual autonomy, and collaborative learning among students and supervisors (Bitzer et al., 2018), while providing social and emotional support that can improve academic writing and increase completion rates.

Despite these advantages, the cohort model also presents challenges. The collaborative environment can lead to conflicts due to differing opinions and perspectives between students and supervisors (Govender & Dhunpath, 2011). Moreover, supervisors may face pressure to support multiple students, while students must commit to group activities and deadlines, potentially increasing stress levels for all parties involved (Govender & Dhunpath, 2011; Ali & Kohun, 2006).

Supervisory Approaches in Postgraduate Supervision

A supervisor employs a variety of supervisory approaches during the supervisory relationship. According to Gatfield (2005), postgraduate supervision can be categorized into four distinct approaches. These include the Laissez-faire, Directive, Contractual, and Pastoral methods, each offering a unique supervisory style. These styles enable supervisors to adapt their guidance to meet students' evolving needs, allowing for flexible application throughout the research process to optimize support and help students achieve their full potential. The following approaches are discussed:

Laissez Faire Approach

Gatfield, (2005) asserts that the hands-off supervisory method involves less active participation of the supervisor. The student is offered extensive latitude to do research with minimal oversight (Mainhard et al., 2009). Some supervisors employ the hands-off method throughout the study project, but others may choose this method solely at the outset. Gatfield (2005) proposes using this method at the initial stage of the thesis writing during topic selection as this may not necessitate significant guidance and assistance by the supervisor.

Directive Approach

A directive supervision involves close monitoring and active guidance, providing structured support to learners who require additional direction (Rettig et al., 2000; Gatfield, 2005). This approach features regular interactions, ensuring students stay on track and produce quality research.

Contractual Approach

In the Contractual approach, supervisors engage in a collaborative partnership with students, providing guidance and support through regular consultations (Gatfield, 2005). The contractual strategy is more effective when the research project is in its final stages and is already taking shape. During data collection and analysis, the student has gained a in-depth knowledge of the thesis. The supervisor's role shifts to a consultative approach, providing guidance and feedback to refine the research project through collaborative discussions with the student (Gatfield, 2005; Rettig et al., 2000).

Pastoral Approach

This is a supervisory style in which the supervisor provides both academic and emotional support to the research student (Schulze, 2012). It is an approach that recognizes the student as a person and a learner (Zandvliet, 2014). The pastoral approach can be used in conjunction with other ways to encourage and empower the student to conduct research (Gatfield, 2005; Schulze, 2012). The supervisor's emotional support bolsters the research student's confidence to assume greater responsibilities in completing the research endeavour (Schulze, 2012).

The interaction between the student and the supervisor is crucial in all postgraduate supervision models and approaches. The sections below discuss the various aspects of the supervisory relationship.

Postgraduate Supervisory Relationship

Effective postgraduate studies hinge significantly on the supervisory relationship. Research has shown that graduates who complete their studies within the expected timeframe may have had positive interactions with their supervisors (Jones, 2013; Litalien & Guay, 2015).

This section delves into the key aspects of the student-supervisor dynamic, exploring how to build and maintain a productive relationship. Specifically, it examines four essential components: the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students, creating a conducive environment, and the expectations, experiences, negotiations, and perceptions of success that shape this vital relationship.

Developing and Maintaining the Student-Supervisor Relationship

An effective student-supervisor relationship requires mutual effort, honesty, and respect (Bourhis, 2014; Temmerman, 2015). This collaborative partnership is built on open communication, trust, and a willingness to address issues promptly.

To foster a healthy and productive relationship, both students and supervisors must take responsibility for proactive conflict resolution and collaborative problem-solving. Regular dialogue helps prevent misconceptions and divergent views from escalating into serious conflicts that could hinder the master's student's development (Bourhis, 2014).

Ultimately, a well-functioning student-supervisor relationship is crucial for postgraduate students' growth and timely completion of their research studies (Halse, 2011b). By prioritizing mutual respect, honesty, and effective communication, students and supervisors can create a supportive environment conducive to academic success.

Early in the supervisory relationship, the expectations and responsibilities should be clearly defined. (Petersen, 2007). At the outset of the study endeavour, both members should consider how their partnership will function. This is beneficial for establishing an enduring and cooperative relationships during the study time (Watt & Chiappetta, 2011). The relationship between the student and the supervisor is crucial to the success of the student's research project, and as such, a solid foundation must be established at the outset of the study (Jones, 2013).

Developing effective student-supervisor relationships relies on the sharing of supervisory experiences. This exchange highlights challenges, successful strategies, and refines supervisory approaches (Phillips & Pugh, 2010; Styles & Radloff, 2001) The varied experiences of supervisors will be expounded upon in the following parts. Sharing these stories among supervisor colleagues raises consciousness of the supervisory relationship (Styles & Radloff, 2001).The examination of supervisory experiences highlights opportunities for growth and improvement in student-supervisor partnerships, informing strategies for productive relationships and effective collaboration (Phillips & Pugh, 2010; Styles & Radloff, 2001).

Open, unrestricted dialogue between students and supervisors is essential for building trust and establishing a strong working relationship

(Khanna & Den Otter, 2013). When students and supervisors communicate amicably, they can create tailored supervision strategies, establish collaborative working structures, and foster supportive environments that facilitate high-quality work and exceptional thesis outcomes (Watt & Chiappetta, 2011).

By prioritizing effective communication and shared supervisory experiences, supervisors can create an optimal learning environment. This enables students to thrive, produce outstanding research, and develop valuable skills for their academic and professional pursuits.

The Role of a Supervisor

Being a supervisor is assuming the obligations and tasks associated with supervising a research thesis. (Halse, 2011b; Jones, 2013). Supervisors play a crucial role in guiding research students, requiring expertise in the research topic, relevant literature, and understanding of the field's history and debates. As De Boone (2014), Halse (2011b), and Hasrati (2005) highlight, effective supervision demands specialized knowledge, enabling supervisors to provide informed advice and support.

A study by Hassan et al., 2009 provides additional insight into the supervisor's responsibilities. They recognized many supervisory functions, such as assisting the student, evaluating the student's work, and providing guidance and consultation. The supervisor must also monitor and evaluate the student's progress during the duration of the study (Hassan et al., 2009; Malfroy, 2005). The job of monitoring and evaluating the student's progress has been stated by supervisors as an essential aspect of supervision that fosters student growth and development (Malfroy, 2005; Price & Money, 2002). It

allows the learner to concentrate on the research project while developing critical and independent thought (Halse, 2011b). Supervisors play a vital role in nurturing research students into autonomous scholars, capable of independent research (McCallin & Nayar, 2012). They train, empower, and assist students in acquiring research abilities, sharing expertise and experiences to build confidence (Styles & Radloff, 2001; Price & Money, 2002). Well-versed research students can become independent scholars in their careers.

The Role of a Masters' Student

To receive a master's degree, a master's student must fulfil several tasks. The master's student's principal obligation is to conduct research (Zainal, 2007). The research skills highlighted earlier are crucial strategies for students to master, enabling effective knowledge generation and thesis production (Lessing & Schulze, 2003). By acquiring these skills, students can navigate the research process with confidence.

MPhil students are responsible for their research project, demonstrating dedication to literature review and critical analysis (Hassan et al., 2009; McAlpine & Norton, 2006b). They must exhibit a profound interest in their self-identified research topic, developed under advisor supervision (Hodza, 2008). Understanding the MPhil scope, including completion timelines and required expertise, is crucial.

Additionally, master's students should network with experienced researchers and peers to access additional support, knowledge, and skills. This collaboration, combined with a productive student-supervisor relationship built on open communication and mutual respect, fosters a supportive research

environment (Zainal, 2007; Phillips & Pugh, 2010; Hassan et al., 2009; Lessing & Schulze, 2003).

Conductive Environment for the Student-Supervisor Relationship

An effective supervisory relationship where the two parties can operate harmoniously (Hodza, 2008). A harmonious student-supervisor relationship is vital for research success. This requires mutual commitment, respect, and open communication (Hodza, 2008). Supervisors should demonstrate genuine concern for students' well-being and research needs, while students should be receptive to supervisor guidance (Shariff et al., 2014; Jones, 2013).

Consistent norms and procedures ensure fairness and equality for all students, fostering a productive relationship (Halse, 2011b; Malfroy, 2005; Hodza, 2008). Supervisors must adhere to institutional guidelines, avoiding bias and self-interest. Clear responsibilities and collaborative teamwork are also essential, with students and supervisors understanding and accepting their respective roles.

A strong foundation is laid when students can select and consult with supervisors, discussing objectives and establishing a positive working relationship (James & Baldwin, 1999; Litalien & Guay, 2015). This enables open communication, comfortable collaboration, and ultimately, research success. By establishing this foundation, students and supervisors can work together effectively, achieving their research goals.

Expectations of the Student-Supervisor Relationship

Both supervisors and students have different expectations of their interaction during research process. The sections below explain both students and supervisors' expectations during thesis supervision.

Expectations of MPhil Students in the Supervisory Relationship

Master students have high hopes for their supervisory relationships. The anticipated improvement throughout the thesis writing process is vital. Each student has unique needs and a distinct personality, which may sometimes fluctuate. The MPhil candidates anticipate an orientation to the program and the degree (Pole et al., 1997). Even while universities provide handbooks and orientation programs to master's applicants, MPhil students have high expectations from their supervisors. They seek guidance on formal requirements, institutional orientation, and research procedures (Spear, 2000; Ali et al., 2016; Cadman, 2000). Students also rely on supervisors to help select research topics with suitable depth and feasibility, ensuring timely completion within university-mandated deadlines (Nulty et al., 2009; Friedrich-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014).

Additionally, students expect direction on meeting MPhil requirements and rely on supervisors due to their limited knowledge and perceived competence in their field (Gill & Burnard, 2008; Pole et al., 1997). Effective supervision involves providing orientation, introducing students to research procedures, offering topic suggestions, and demonstrating interest in their research initiatives (McClure, 2005; Walker & Thomson, 2010).

A supportive supervisor-student relationship is crucial. When supervisors show interest in students' research, it fosters a beneficial

environment, stimulating intelligent work (Mcclure, 2005). Conversely, lack of interest can hinder progress. Students value supervisors' expertise and expect guidance throughout their MPhil journey, addressing uncertainties and ensuring timely completion. Overall, supervisors play a vital role in facilitating students' research success. By understanding students' expectations and providing comprehensive support, supervisors can create a productive and supportive learning environment.

Master's students expect consistent communication with their supervisors throughout their academic journey. However, supervisors' busy schedules often hinder regular interaction, causing student frustration. To mitigate this, some institutions have established formal requirements for regular meetings and contingency plans for supervisor absences. Timely and constructive feedback is also crucial for students. Delays in feedback can lead to anxiety, while prompt feedback enhances learning, boosts confidence, and allows students to refine their work. Supervisors should prioritize providing regular, helpful feedback to facilitate student progress.

Students also rely on supervisors to provide essential learning resources, introduce them to academic forums, and foster intellectual growth. This includes sharing relevant literature, recommending conferences, and facilitating seminar participation. By doing so, supervisors can create a supportive environment that encourages students to excel. Beyond academic guidance, supervisors are expected to navigate collaborative publications, ensuring fair acknowledgement of student contributions. Transparency and mutual respect are vital in these partnerships. Additionally, supervisors should offer pastoral care, providing emotional support and guidance. Challenges

however arise when supervisors fail to recognize student contributions, display their work without credit, or hesitate to address personal issues. Institutions and supervisors must strike a balance between academic guidance and emotional support, prioritizing students' needs to foster a productive and supportive learning environment. Effective supervision is critical to Master's students' success. By understanding and meeting student expectations, supervisors can create a positive, nurturing environment that promotes academic excellence and personal growth.

Expectations of Thesis Supervisors in the Supervisory Relationship

Supervisors have some expectations of their MPhil students to ensure a successful research experience. They anticipate students to be self-motivated, possessing problem-solving skills, self-discipline, creativity, and effective communication (Friedrich-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014; Halse, 2011a). Supervisors believe students with these attributes can work independently, producing high-quality work with minimal guidance. They expect students to demonstrate research capabilities, including identifying problems, formulating research questions, and developing methodologies (Halse, 2011b). They also expect students to conduct extensive literature reviews and develop into independent, mature scholars (Litalien & Guay, 2015; Phillips & Pugh, 2010).

Furthermore, publishing research findings is another key expectation. Many supervisors anticipate students to publish their work, and to graduate, many master's programs require students to publish one or two articles (Hassan et al., 2009; Friedrich-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014). Supervisors often co-author these articles with students, preparing them for academic conferences and workshops.

Timely thesis completion is also essential. Supervisors expect students to demonstrate dedication and commitment, working diligently to finish their research projects within the allotted timeframe (Litalien & Guay, 2015; Pole et al., 1997). Students who embrace constructive criticism and feedback typically make rapid progress and complete their studies within the scheduled timeframe.

Experiences of the Supervisory Process

In this context, 'experiences' refers to the interactions between MPhil students and their supervisors. This section describes the experiences of masters' students and their supervisors in the student-supervisor relationship.

Experiences of Master Students in the Supervisory Process

The supervisory relationship significantly impacts MPhil students' experiences. A positive relationship fosters lifelong achievement and career success, while a negative one leads to dissatisfaction, dropout, or delayed completion (Grevholm et al., 2005; Grant & Graham, 1999). However, some students face strained relationships due to personality clashes, professional differences, or organizational issues (Krauss & Ismi, 2010).

This can result in feelings of frustration, humiliation, and powerlessness, with some supervisors exhibiting dictatorial behavior or bullying (Morris, 2011; Smallwood, 2004; Zainal, 2007; Lewis, 2004). Students may experience misunderstandings, unreasonable task demands, isolation, overwork, and destabilization, affecting their well-being and academic progress.

Despite these challenges, many MPhil graduates report positive experiences with supportive supervisors who provide constructive feedback,

guidance, and dedication (Cadman, 2000; Grevholm et al., 2005; Halse, 2011b). Effective supervision requires awareness of students' concerns, adaptability, and balanced power dynamics (James & Baldwin, 1999; Ungadi et al., 2015). This fosters a productive and enriching learning environment for MPhil students.

Experiences of the Supervisor in the Supervisory Process

The supervising process is a reciprocal learning experience, where supervisors learn from their students and expand their expertise. Interacting with new students introduces innovative viewpoints, enabling supervisors to venture into unexplored research territories and enhance their expertise (Firth & Martens, 2008; Jones, 2013; Styles & Radloff, 2001). Engaging with new students brings fresh perspectives, allowing supervisors to explore new research areas and deepen their understanding.

However, supervision also presents challenges. Supervisors may encounter disengaged or struggling students, who lack confidence or struggle with managing reading requirements (Cadman, 2000; Styles & Radloff, 2001; Phillips & Pugh, 2010). Conversely, working with motivated students can be rewarding and gratifying. Effective supervision requires students to take ownership of their research and seek guidance from supervisors (Halse, 2011a; Hodza, 2008). Students should not rely solely on supervisors for direction, but rather collaborate and seek support to strengthen their projects.

Collaborative supervision fosters mutual benefits, including co-authoring articles and developing personal and intellectual relationships (Hassan et al., 2009; Lessing & Schulze, 2003; Malfroy, 2005). Supervisors and students can encourage each other to explore new research areas,

promoting a supportive and enriching learning environment. This collaborative approach enhances the supervision experience for both parties.

Negotiating the Student-Supervisor Relationship

Effective MPhil student-supervisor relationships rely on negotiation and collaboration. Regular discussions prevent misunderstandings, strained relationships, and ensure timely completion (Lessing & Schulze, 2003; Gurr, 2001). Initial negotiation at the program's onset lays a solid foundation for a productive partnership. Key aspects to negotiate include contributions, consultation frequency, academic writing style, and conflict resolution strategies (Grant, 2005; Detsky & Baerlocher, 2007; Watt & Chiappetta, 2011). Supervisors should recognize students' authority, acknowledge their expertise, and empower them to exercise autonomy (Grant, 2005; Pearson & Brew, 2002b). Transparency and open communication are essential in negotiations. By embracing negotiation and collaboration, students and supervisors can cultivate a supportive learning environment. This fosters academic excellence, professional growth, and helps navigate potential power inequalities and conflicts (James & Baldwin, 1999; Petersen, 2007). A well-defined agreement ensures a constructive research experience, benefiting both parties.

Expected Challenges of the Supervisory Relationship

The student-supervisor relationship is a critical factor influencing the quality and completion of graduate theses and dissertations. This relationship is often characterized by power dynamics, communication exchanges, mutual expectations, and emotional support. Challenges in this relationship can lead to delays, attrition, or reduced research quality. This review will discuss the

expected challenges from both the student and supervisor perspectives, drawing on various theoretical frameworks and empirical studies.

One key challenge supervisors and students faced during thesis supervision is the issue of communication gap. Effective communication is a cornerstone of a productive student-supervisor relationship. However, research indicates that miscommunication or lack of communication is a prevalent issue. Sinclair (2004) highlighted that unclear guidance or vague feedback from supervisors is a frequent challenge that students face. When students do not understand what is expected of them, they may struggle to make progress, leading to frustration and wasted efforts.

Similarly, Lessing and Schulze (2002) found that students often feel their supervisors do not provide enough detailed feedback, leaving them unsure how to improve their work. According to Lee (2008), timely and constructive feedback is essential for maintaining student momentum. However, supervisors often face time constraints, which can delay feedback, creating significant bottlenecks in the thesis process (Hockey, 1996). Delays in feedback can demotivate students, especially when they are waiting to proceed with the next phase of their research.

Additionally, the alignment of expectations between students and supervisors is crucial for a smooth research process. Studies have highlighted the challenges arising from misaligned or unclear expectations. Grant (2003), found that supervisors expect students to be more independent and proactive, while students often expect more hands-on guidance. This misalignment can lead to conflicts and dissatisfaction in the relationship. A study by Ives and Rowley (2005) revealed that students often feel lost when they perceive a lack

of direction, while supervisors may feel frustrated when students do not take enough initiative. Frischer and Larsson (2000) noted that unclear roles and responsibilities are a common source of tension. Students may not fully understand the supervisor's expectations for the scope, depth, and originality of their thesis, leading to confusion and stress. Similarly, supervisors may be uncertain about how much independence to grant their students, balancing between offering support and fostering independent research skills.

Lack of emotional and psychological support is another challenge students face during thesis supervision. The student-supervisor relationship is not just an academic partnership but also an emotional and psychological one. Research has shown that students benefit from supervisors who provide both intellectual and emotional support. A study by Golde (2000) highlighted that emotional support is often overlooked in the supervision process. Students who perceive their supervisors as unsupportive or distant may experience heightened anxiety, affecting their academic performance and well-being. Gurr (2001) found that students are more likely to drop out or extend their studies if they feel unsupported emotionally. Lovitts (2001) suggests that the thesis process can be highly stressful, and supervisors play a crucial role in helping students manage stress and maintain well-being. However, some supervisors may lack the skills or awareness to provide adequate emotional support, focusing solely on academic guidance (Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 2004).

Ghost-writing, also known as contract cheating, refers to the practice where writers are paid to draft articles and thesis which scientists from academia are credited with authorship to enhance the article's credibility and

give the impression it is from an unbiased source (Langdon-Neuner, 2008). The term "ghostwriting" encompasses various interpretations, which vary based on the extent of the ghostwriter's engagement. Certain instances, such as memoirs wherein a named author and a ghost-writer collaborate extensively, are seen ethically permissible, given that the involvement of the ghost-writer is duly acknowledged.

In contrast, ghostwriting in which the student/academic is using/paying ghost-writers to complete parts of or entire projects without any inputs of their own, or proper acknowledgement is defined as academic dishonesty (Bosch & Ross, 2012). Ghostwriting threatens the credibility of academia and is second to plagiarism as the two most common forms of academic dishonesty (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2016). From the results of the study, students' use of ghost writers is abhorred by supervisors at the IEPA. Consequently, if students continue employing ghostwriters for writing their thesis and supervisors find out, supervisors' relationship will be mired, which will result in late completion of the thesis.

Perceptions of the Student-Supervisor Relationship in the Successful Completion of Master's Studies

Different perspectives exist among MPhil students regarding what constitutes satisfactory completion of master's studies. Those who have successfully finished their master's studies might owe their achievement to several variables. Establishing a productive supervisory relationship is vital for MPhil studies' successful completion. This section examines master's students' perspectives on this relationship, emphasizing effective supervision's significance. Supervisors, in turn, derive great satisfaction from mentoring

their students (Manathunga, 2007; Mouton, 2001). Students who have a positive rapport with their supervisors tend to achieve greater academic success (Mouton, 2001; Wright, 2003). According to Lessing and Schulze (2003), master's graduates often credit their supervisors' guidance as the primary factor motivating them to complete their dissertations and MPhil studies. These graduates describe their supervisors as providing invaluable direction and support, ensuring the successful completion of their research projects (Lessing & Schulze, 2003). Many accomplished MPhil recipients stress the importance of fostering a collaborative student-supervisor relationship, characterized by regular communication and interaction, to facilitate the completion of master's studies (Manathunga, 2007).

Scholars agree that regular meetings between students and supervisors are vital for maintaining a productive working relationship and promoting student progress (Gill & Burnard, 2008; Lessing & Schulze, 2003; Manathunga, 2007). Master's students benefit from regular supervisor meetings, which offer guidance, direction, and feedback. Meetings are tailored to individual needs, with frequency and length varying throughout the study (Gill & Burnard, 2008). Initially and nearing completion, meetings tend to be more frequent (Manathunga, 2007).

Many successful MPhil graduates believe they can complete their studies on schedule because their supervisors give prompt and timely feedback (Martin, 2014). In addition to timely input, master's graduates see the positive feedback from their supervisors as a significant role in their success (Sayed et al., 1998b). A constructive critique boosts learning and helps the research student's consistent advancement (Sayed et al., 1998b).

Additionally, it appears that a relationship in which Working as part of a cohort with supervisors enhances the likelihood of successfully completing MPhil studies (Bista & Cox, 2014). Many MPhil graduates believe that learning communities, which include both students and their supervisors, help individuals finish their studies within the expected timeframe (Lei et al., 2003). A cohort is composed of MPhil students and their supervisors who collaborate as a team, offering mutual support throughout the research journey. Graduates who participated in cohorts have noted that the relationship within the cohort played a key role in their academic success (Bista & Cox, 2014). The interactions and exchange of ideas and knowledge between students and mentors in the cohort significantly contribute to the research students' achievements (Nelson Mandela University et al., 2011).

Some MPhil graduates say they were able to complete their studies because they were able to overcome difficulties associated with the supervisory relationship.(McClure, 2005; Mouton, 2001).This view is commonly held by graduates who have experienced challenging relationships with their supervisors, often leading them to accept the situation as a coping mechanism to manage the tension in their supervisory relationship (McClure, 2005). Despite these difficulties, they find ways to navigate and complete their research by adapting to the dynamics of the relationship (Zainal, 2007). Many MPhil graduates believe that students cannot always expect to receive everything they want from their supervisors, and therefore, adaptability is key to success (Zainal, 2007). Additionally, master's graduates often credit their success to the strengthening of their relationships with supervisors (Schulze, 2012; Mouton, 2001). Positive, encouraging comments from supervisors are

seen as a significant boost, giving students the confidence to stay focused and complete their studies on time (Mouton, 2001). Supervisors are viewed as empathetic figures who inspire motivation, prompting students to put in extra effort to succeed (Lessing & Schulze, 2003). Many graduates value supportive words, such as “good luck with your studies” or “best wishes,” from their supervisors (Schulze, 2012, p. 5). While these remarks may seem small, students report that they provide crucial emotional support, helping them regain their focus and motivation to continue their research. These findings suggest that supervisors should offer encouragement and motivation to help facilitate the successful completion of master’s studies (Schulze, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

The influence of the student-supervisor relationship on thesis completion is well-documented in various theories and research studies. One of the key theories that provide a detailed backing for understanding how this relationship affects thesis completion is the Interpersonal Perspective Theory. The theory focuses on two key things: effective communication between students and supervisors is crucial for understanding expectations, receiving feedback, and maintaining motivation. Miscommunication or a lack of clarity can lead to misunderstandings and delays in thesis progress.

The second aspect is emotional support: A supportive supervisor can provide not only academic guidance but also emotional support. Interpersonal perspective theory and the Nested contexts framework were used to interpret student-supervisor relationship data and how they influence thesis completion by MPhil students in the IEPA.

Interpersonal Perspective Theory

Leary's (1957) Interpersonal Theory: Two dimensions (dominance-submission, love-hate) form 4 quadrants and 16 categories of interpersonal behavior. According to the theory, the two aspects underlie all social behaviour.

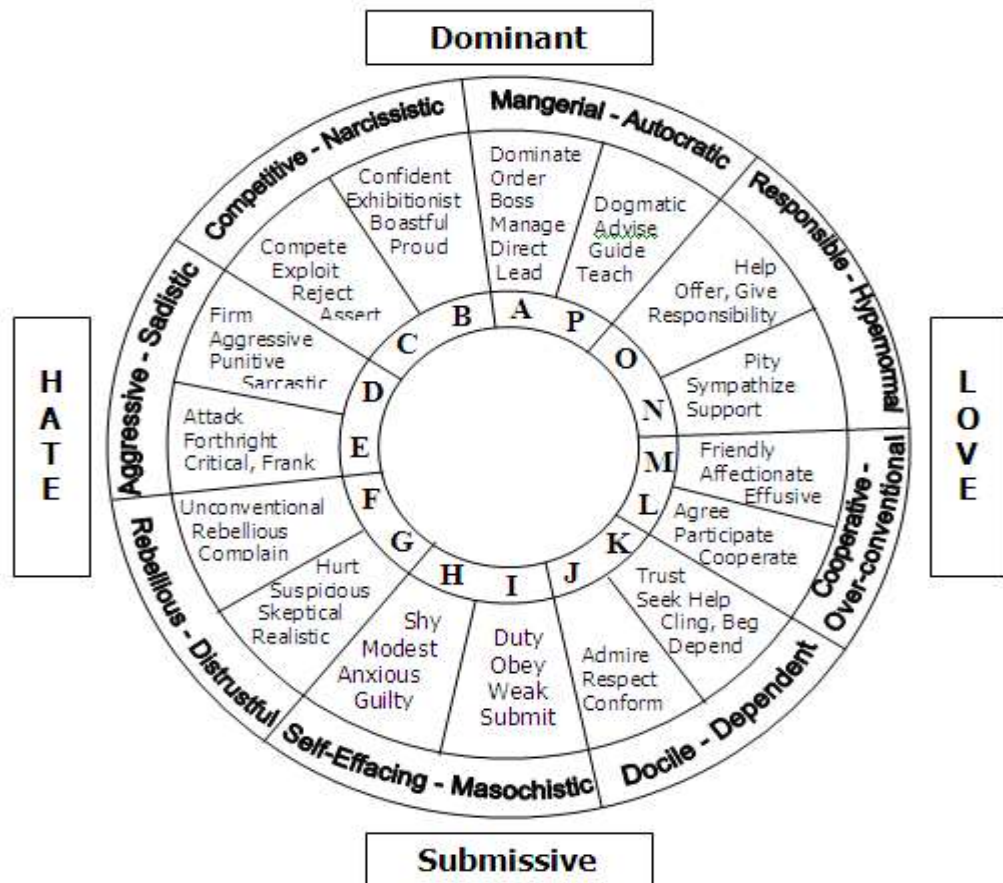


Figure 1: Circumplex model for interpersonal behaviour (Leary, 1957, p. 65).

The model was built on a psychological context and has been shown successfully through extensive research. Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) adopted and modified the education environment model to analyze the supervision relationship that exist between research supervisors and their students and its effects on academic outcomes.

Two components comprise the paradigm for interpersonal, supervisory behaviour: influence and affiliation/proximity. The influence dimension is a continuum ranging from dominance to submission; it represents the amount to which a specific supervisor influences a student's behaviours. The affiliation/proximity dimension is likewise a continuum ranging from opposition to collaboration; it depicts the supervisor and student's behavior can be analyzed through two primary dimensions: dominance (influence) and cooperation (affiliation), reflecting their level of control and interpersonal connection with students. emotional distance or interpersonal proximity. Supervisor behavior can be understood through the lens of two fundamental dimensions: dominance (influence) and cooperation (affiliation). These dimensions intersect to define eight distinct types of supervisor behavior, each with its unique characteristics.

Leadership, for instance, is marked by a high level of influence and a moderate degree of cooperation. This contrasts with uncertain behavior, which is characterized by a lack of influence and relatively low cooperation. Helpful and friendly behaviors, on the other hand, are distinguished by high cooperation.

Other supervisor behaviors can be similarly categorized. Granting students independence involves low dominance paired with high cooperation. In contrast, dissatisfaction and strictness are marked by low cooperation, with strictness also involving high dominance. Admonishing behavior falls somewhere in between, with moderate dominance but low cooperation. Understanding these dimensions and their interplay provides valuable insight

into the complex dynamics of supervisor-student relationships, highlighting the range of behaviors supervisors exhibit and their impact on students.

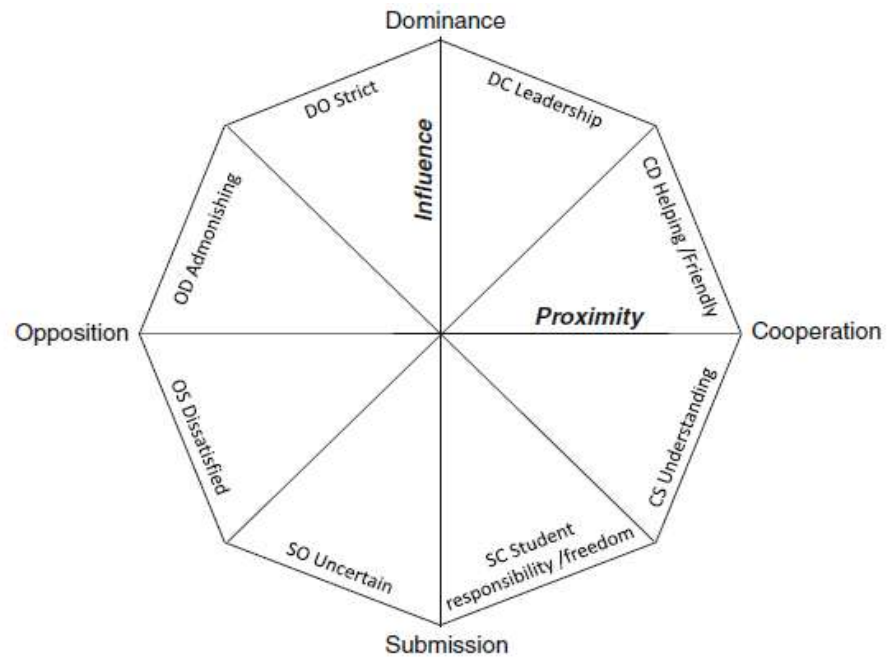


Figure 2: The model for interpersonal supervisor behaviour (Mainhard et al., 2009), p. 363), adopted from (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005).

Building on the foundational work of Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) and subsequent adaptations by Mainhard et al. (2009), this study leveraged the interpersonal supervisor behavior model to explore student-supervisor interactions. The model's two dimensions and eight corresponding behavior patterns provided a theoretical framework for analyzing and contextualizing the study's findings.

The Nested Contexts Framework

The Nested Contexts framework, developed by McAlpine and Norton (2006), is an integrated theoretical framework that centres on the student's experience. According to their framework, learning occurs within multiple nested contexts, each containing factors that influence attrition and retention. The nested systems represent various contexts or stakeholders that may

influence the success of research graduate (MPhil) students. The student-supervisor relationship, which exists in the departmental context and within a departmentally specified program, is at the centre. The departmental context is nested in the institutional context, which in turn is nested in the societal or supra-societal context. Because the contexts are nested, they influence one another, with those closest to one another and at the bottom of the framework having the most influence on thesis completion (Figure 3). This implies that the student-supervisor relationship has the greatest impact on attrition and retention (thesis completion) since it is at the base of the framework.

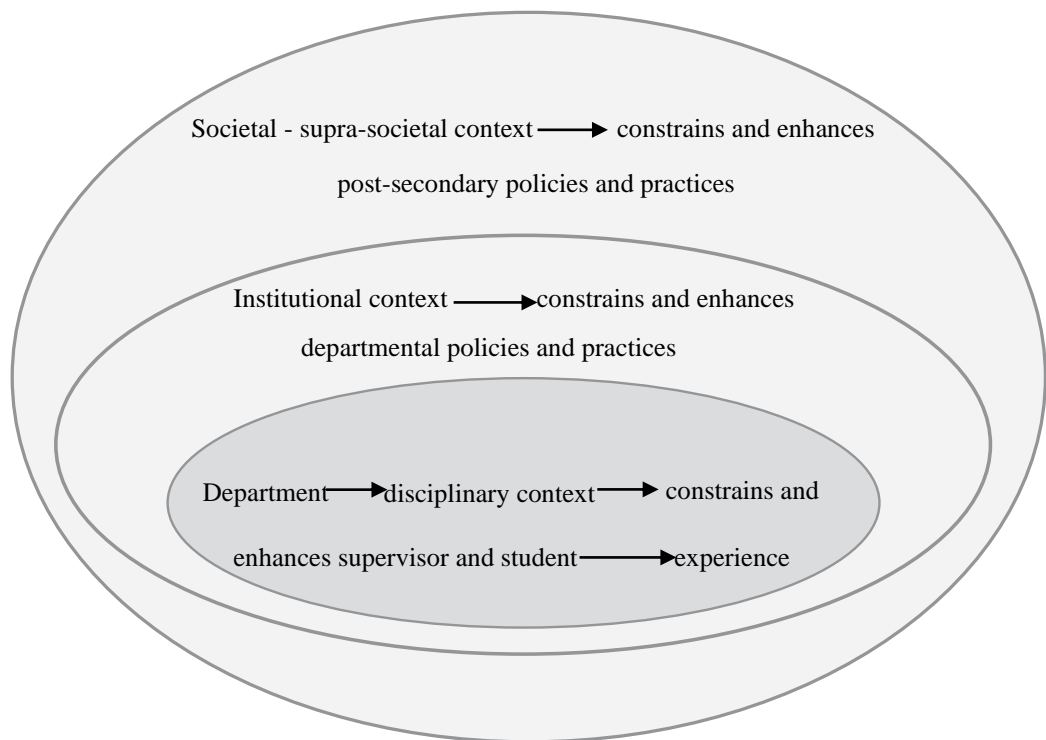


Figure 3: Nested context influencing retention and completion

Source: (McAlpine & Norton 2006:6)

Empirical Review

Student-Supervisor Relationship Influencing Masters' Thesis Completion

A significant body of research identifies factors contributing to student delays in thesis completion and graduation. One factor that remains crucial to MPhil thesis completion is the effectiveness of the supervision (Galt, 2013). Jones, (2013) agrees that the student-supervisor relationship is a determining factor in thesis completion. Jones argues that the most crucial factor in students' decisions to complete or withdraw from their postgraduate studies is their relationship with their supervisors. The quality of the relationship between the student and the supervisor is imperative for successful thesis completion within the program duration since supervisors are assigned to research students to provide them with technical support critical for writing and completing theses (Burham, 2019). This observation is confirmed by recent literature, which indicates that the most recurring factors in literature that mainly affect graduate thesis completion are the student-advisor relationship and mentorship (Young et al., 2019).

Other research supports the notion that the student-supervisor dynamic is the key factor influencing master's students' ability to complete their theses. For example, Hodza (2008) found that a quality student-supervisor relationship is needed to create a conducive environment to facilitate thesis completion among MPhil students. Again, Khozaei Ravari and Tan (2019) found that the supervisors' role and supervisor-supervisee relationships remained crucial in Iranian MA students' thesis completion. Moreover, De Clercq et al. (2019) support the above position that only supervisor support

(and the relationship with the students) significantly predicted the outcomes (completion of graduate school) of graduate students.

According to Essuman (2020), MPhil thesis completion is affected by supervisor availability, style, and relationship. Thaba-Nkadimene (2020) investigated how supervision models influence graduate thesis completion and graduation and revealed that collaborative supervision enhances student development. She concluded that a solid supervision model, such as collaborative supervision, improves research output. In addition, positive student-supervisor rapport was found by Fetene and Tamrat (2021) to be the most influencing factor in thesis completion among graduate students.

Other studies have shown that a healthy relationship between student and supervisor is helpful for the success of the thesis. The thesis is an embedded social exercise more than most of the other educational projects, therefore collaborating with the supervisor, regular productive meetings and the ability to reach a shared understanding are central to the success of the project (Koskenoja, 2019; Rauf, 2016; Young et al., 2019). According to de Kleijn et al. (2012), a relationship where the supervisor exerts moderate control of the process and more significant affiliation was found to influence the successful outcome in terms of time to completion and completion rates.

Experiences of Students in Students-Supervisor Relationship

In their study on the supervision experiences of postgraduate research students Cekiso et al. (2019) found that communication breakdown, poor feedback, non-availability of some supervisors, and lack of ethical consideration were challenges experienced by the students which affected their theses completion.

Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework used to analyze the nature of the student-supervisor relationship and its influence on thesis completion at the IEPA of the UCC is presented in Figure 4. The author constructed the Conceptual Framework after a theoretical review of the Interpersonal Perspective Theory, Nested Contexts framework, concepts and empirical research outputs of studies related to the objectives of the study.

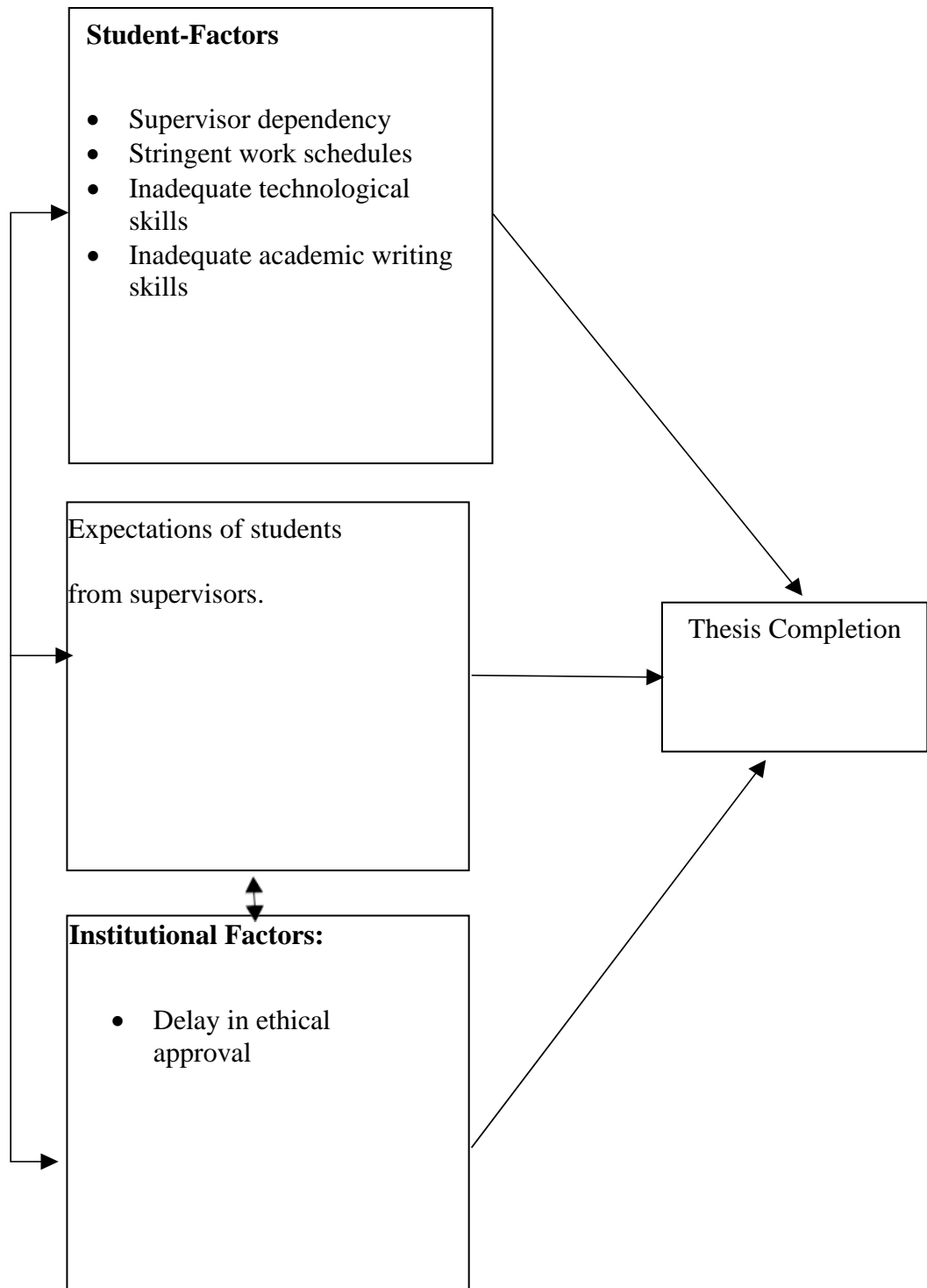


Figure 4: Influence of student-supervisor relationship on MPhil thesis completion

Source: Author's construct

The relationship between students and supervisors, characterized by the alignment of expectations, effective communication, timely feedback, mutual support, and adaptive guidance, is a critical determinant of thesis completion. Challenges on either side, if not managed effectively, can lead to delays, reduced research quality, and even attrition. Conversely, when expectations are clear and both parties work collaboratively to overcome challenges, the likelihood of timely and successful thesis completion is greatly enhanced.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter outlines the research methodology, encompassing the research design, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. Additionally, it provides an overview of the study area and addresses ethical considerations.

Research Design

As noted by Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018), research design provides a structured framework that directs the research process, linking research goals to conclusive findings. The pragmatism paradigm used for this study acknowledges that the value and truth of ideas are determined by their practical effectiveness and their ability to solve real-world problems. Proponents of this philosophical standpoint believe that the most important thing is to find the best techniques and procedures that solves the problem statement (Rahi, 2017). The researcher therefore employed mixed-method approach which was informed by the research objectives that required practical outcomes, flexibility, integration of multiple perspectives, and adaptability.

For this study, a cross-sectional, concurrent mixed design was employed which allowed the collection of quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, to answer distinct research questions (Zheng, 2015). According to Ganju, Mahapatra, and Saggurti (2013), the cross-sectional concurrent design allows for modifying quantitative data with qualitative data findings by collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data that address distinct

research questions at the period. The quantitative data were obtained from postgraduate MPhil education students either in the “thesis stage” or had completed school from the IEPA of the University of Cape Coast.

The qualitative data were obtained from purposively sampling students and supervisors from IEPA. The students and the lecturers/supervisors shared the challenges they faced in their relationship during the writing of the thesis and how they overcame those challenges (Creswell, 2009; Tashakkori et al., 1998). Phenomenology, in particular, was used to offer a coherent summary of the supervisors’ and students’ experiences in terms of challenges and ways of overcoming those challenges during thesis writing by drawing insights into the meaning of their experiences from the stories they shared (Creswell, 2009). Phenomenology, as outlined by Lester (1999) and Donalek (2004), involves gathering detailed, subjective accounts of experiences through interviews, discussions, and observations, allowing researchers to understand phenomena from the participants' perspectives.

Study Area

The study was conducted at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in the Central Region of Ghana. The University of Cape Coast (UCC) is a public collegiate university in the historic town of Cape Coast. It has two campuses: the Southern (Old Site) Campus and the Northern Campus (New Site) (Times Higher Education, 2022). UCC has a student population of 78485 as of 2022, with 41165 (52.4%) males and 37320 (47.6%) females. There are 6226 graduate students in total, with 5648 (90.7%) master's students and 578 (9.3%) Ph.D. students (Otoo, 2022).

IEPA which is one of the largest centres for regular master's students offers degrees in Educational Planning, Educational Administration, and Administration in Higher Education, as well as two PhD programs in Qualitative Based Research and Educational Leadership, solidifying its position as a vital hub for advanced education within UCC.

The IEPA serves as the case study for this study because anecdotal evidence suggests that most graduate students at the institute do not complete their degrees within the required two years for MPhil students and three years for PhD students. Given the university's academic excellence and potential, it is critical to investigate why thesis completion is delayed in its graduate school, particularly among postgraduates at IEPA, to identify ways to improve the situation and contribute to its increased global recognition.

The Population of the Study

In this study, the population consisted of two groups: the first group consisted of regular MPhil students of IEPA who enrolled in any of the three major programs in the Institute within the years (2016,2017,2018,2019 and 2020) numbering 107. The second population comprised all lecturers who are either currently supervising MPhil students or have supervised MPhil students at IEPA totaling 16. The total population of the study is 123.

According to the sampling frame, the student populations for 2016, 2017, 2018-, 2019-, and 2020-year groups were 30, 10, 18, 22, 27, and as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Study Population

Year group	Class population
2016	30
2017	10
2018	18
2019	22
2020	27
Total	107

Source: Management Information System Unit, UCC

Sample and Sampling Procedure

All students in the specified year groups were considered respondents for the quantitative data using a census. Lavrakas (2008) defines census as surveying every individual or element within a specific population, allowing researchers to gather data on the entire group and assess the desired attributes of each component.

Five MPhil students were selected using a convenience sampling approach for in-depth interviews to shed more light on their experiences and how it influenced their thesis completion. The students for the interview were conveniently selected because most of the students in this category had finished their coursework component and so were geographically scattered during the period of data collection so only students who were readily available and easily accessible for interviews were considered (Etikan et al., 2016).

On the part of supervisors, due to their busy schedules at the time of data collection, 9 out of the population of 16 supervisors were readily available to respond to the questionnaire for supervisors. To gather qualitative data, a purposive sampling method was utilized to select a subset of highly

experienced supervisors, specifically two professors and one senior lecturer, who have 10-20 years supervision experience. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, is the deliberate selection of a participant based on the qualities the participant possesses. The researcher determines what information is required and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information based on their knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data from students and supervisors using four content-validated instruments. To collect quantitative data, two sets of questionnaires were used, one for students and one for supervisors, and two sets of structured interview guides were used, each for students and supervisors.

To ensure the instrument's validity, the researcher and supervisor collaborated on two key aspects: Face validity was established by using clear, concise language that effectively conveyed the instrument's purpose, making it easily understandable. Content validity was confirmed through the supervisor's thorough review, verifying that the instrument's content aligned precisely with the study's research questions and objectives

Questionnaire for Students

The questionnaire for students was made up of four (4) parts below:

PART A: Demographic characteristics of MPhil students in IEPA

PART B: Items on years taken to complete thesis

PART C: Items on the nature of the student-supervisor relationship that exist in IEPA.

PART D: Items on the expectations of master's students during the student-supervisor relationship

Questionnaire for Supervisors

The questionnaire for supervisors was made up of two (2) parts below:

PART A: Demographic characteristics

PART B: Items on supervisors' expectations of students during thesis supervision.

Two set of structured interview guides were developed, one for gathering information about students and the other for supervisors on the challenges they faced and how they managed it during the supervision process.

Pilot Testing of Research Instrument

As noted by Kankam (2010), pretesting has three key goals: to validate the research instrument, ensure clarity of items, and verify adherence to relevant research protocols and procedures.

Both students' and supervisors' instruments were pilot-tested at the Schools of Agriculture and Business in the University of Cape Coast. This was done to provide a broader range of perspectives from diverse disciplines on the student-supervisor relationship which will prevent single- discipline approach. Pilot testing led to targeted revisions of the research instrument, specifically refining questionnaire items, interview guides, and Likert-type scales to enhance overall instrument validity and reliability.

Reliability of Instruments

To assess instrument reliability, this study employed Cronbach's Alpha using SPSS 25. The results (0.63-0.92) demonstrated acceptable to excellent

internal consistency, confirming the Likert scale items effectively measured the intended constructs, in line with Gliem and Gliem's (2003) guidelines.

Table 2 shows the reliability coefficients of various constructs in the instrument.

Table 2: Reliability of various constructs of the questionnaire

Construct	Alpha	No. of items	N
1. Students expectation of supervisors in students-supervisor relationship during thesis writing	0.85	16	10
2. Supervisors' expectations of students in the student-supervisor relationship during thesis writing	0.92	12	8
3. Nature of student-supervisor relationship	0.63	8	10

Source: Field Data (2022).

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three scales – students' expectations (0.85), supervisors' expectations (0.92), and relationship nature (0.63) – indicate reliability, surpassing the thresholds suggested by Haines et al. (2013) and Straub et al. (2004). This confirms the instrument's effectiveness in measuring student-supervisor relationship constructs.

Data Collection Procedure

Through each year's course representative, an introductory letter from IEPA was sent to student respondents to introduce the researcher as a student undertaking a study on the influence of student-supervisor relationships on thesis completion in IEPA. A copy of the letter was also presented to lecturers (supervisors) at the IEPA who were also briefed on the study and its purpose via their emails and phone numbers obtained from the Institute. The course reps assisted the researcher in identifying students from their respective year groups because during data collection, most of the students within the target

population had completed their course work and so had left campus. This made the students mainly accessible by their course reps due to their existing social media groups.

The researcher was later added to the year groups' WhatsApp pages to introduce the study and its purpose to them. The students' questionnaire was converted to google forms, and a corresponding link was generated, which was then shared with the students on their pages. Questionnaires for supervisors were distributed to supervisors in their offices and via their emails.

To ensure two-way, interactive communication between the researcher and the respondents, the qualitative interviews with selected students and supervisors were conducted in person by the researcher. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher obtained informed consent from respondents to record the conversations. Although guided by specific research questions, the researcher remained flexible, posing additional questions during the interviews to explore emerging themes. The collection of data began in the first week of March 2023 and ended in the last week of March 2023.

Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

The quantitative data was organized and cleaned, resulting in valid data to ensure that the responses matched the study questions on the instruments. After creating a data template in the software (IBM SPSS version 25.0) programme based on the items on the questionnaires, the data were entered into IBM SPSS version 25.0.

The qualitative data utilized descriptive language following Glesne's (2016) guidance, to create detailed accounts that situationalize the events and

experiences shared by participants. Recorded interviews were transcribed and descriptively analyzed.

Students' and supervisors' demographic characteristics were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation. The table below highlights how each research question was analyzed:

Table 3: Research questions, level of measurement and method of analysis

RESEARCH QUESTION	LEVEL OF MEASUREMENT	METHOD OF ANALYSIS
1. What type of student-supervisor relationships exist at IEPA?	Ordinal (Likert-scale)	Mean and standard deviation.
2. What are student expectations of the student-supervisor relationship during thesis supervision at IEPA?	Ordinal (Likert-scale)	Mean and standard deviation.
3. What are supervisor expectations of the student-supervisor relationship during thesis supervision at IEPA?	Ordinal (Likert-scale)	Mean and standard deviation.
4. To what extent does the student-supervisor relationship influence the completion rate of thesis at IEPA?	Ordinal (Likert-scale)	Binomial logistic regression, Pearson product-moment correlation
5. What challenges do students and supervisors face in student-supervisor relationships during thesis writing?	-	Thematic analysis, conventional content analysis
6. How do students and supervisors deal with the challenges they face in student-supervisor relationships during thesis writing?	-	Thematic analysis, conventional content analysis

Source: Author's construct.

Ethical Issues

According to Struwig and Stead (2001), a researcher is responsible for informing participants about the nature of the study and obtaining their consent to participate in it. Potential participants were contacted via email and provided with a brief overview of the study's objectives, after which they were asked to provide informed consent to participate. In addition, The researcher secured ethical approval from the University of Cape Coast's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of the data collected, exploring the student-supervisor relationship's impact on thesis completion, as investigated through a concurrent mixed-methods research design by use of semi-structured interview guides and questionnaires in gathering data. Data analysis was conducted within the pragmatism paradigm, emphasizing flexibility, adaptability, and multi-perspective integration to comprehensively understand participants' viewpoints. The qualitative responses were transcribed, coded manually and discussed whilst the quantitative responses were coded into SPSS and analyzed. The study's findings and analysis are organized to reflect the study's research questions and respondent demographic information.

Bio Data of Respondents

This section presents the results on the background characteristics of the study participants comprising master's students and supervisors at IEPA. Specifically, the reports encompass the sex distribution of students and supervisors, academic rank of supervisors and students' year group, study duration and marital status of students. However, only the student duration of program was found relevant to the study and thus discussed below.

Study Duration of Students

Table 4: Number of years spent in school

Study duration	Years spent in school by students	
	Freq.	%
2years	26	24.3
3years	28	26.2
4years	53	49.5

Source: Field Data (2023).

The results above show only about a quarter (24.3%) of the students completed their MPhil study within the stipulated period of two years. Nearly half (49.5%) of the students completed their master's degree in four years and a little over a quarter (26.2%) of the students spent three years pursuing their master's degree at the IEPA. The results suggest that the most (75.7%) of the MPhil students spent one to two years more in completing their study (Table 8). This data was helpful in determining students who completed in the stipulated years and those who didn't. The results reported in the present study is similar to Albertyn et al. (2008) who found out that more (46%) MPhil students failed to complete within the required period, compared to just a little over a quarter (27%) of the students completing within the stipulated period. The authors further revealed that the major cause of delay in MPhil completion is difficulty students face during thesis stage. The results of the study implies that MPhil completion rate at IEPA is low and effort must be enhanced to improve it.

The section below discusses the results of each research question in details.

Table 5: Decision Rule for the Cut -off means

Mean Range	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very highly agree
3.40-4.19	Highly agree
2.60-3.39	Agree
1.80-2.59	Lowly Agree
1.00-1.79	Least Agree

Research Question 1: What is the nature of student-supervisor relationship at IEPA?

Table 6: Nature of student supervisor relation at the IEPA

Nature of student-supervisor relationship	Student-supervisor relationship	
	M	S D
Structural relationship		
1. Laissez-faire approach		
My supervisor(s) allow (ed) me to do almost every aspect of my thesis by myself	2.94	0.99
My supervisor(s) provide(d) minimal oversight of my thesis	2.45	1.30
	2.61	
2. Directional approach		
My supervisor(s) actively guide(ed) me throughout the thesis process	2.52	0.87
My supervisor(s) engage(d) me in regular interactions throughout the thesis process	2.64	1.11
Overall mean for structural relationship	2.58	0.90
Supportive relationship		
1. Contractual		
My supervisor(s) guide(d) / support(ed) me with reading materials to shape my write-up throughout the thesis process	2.42	1.15
My supervisor(s) offer(ed) me suggestions /comments to shape my thesis throughout the process	2.73	1.51
<i>Weighted mean</i>	2.58	
2. Pastoral approach		
My supervisor(s) encourage(d) me regularly to finish my thesis on time	2.94	1.08
My supervisor(s) provide(d) me with emotional support such as counselling on my difficulties outside academics, to empower me to complete my thesis	2.15	0.91
<i>Weighted mean</i>	2.55	
Overall mean for supportive relationship	2.57	

Source: Field Data (2023).

The weighted mean was calculated by calculating the weighted value of each data point and by multiplying each data point value by its weight and then summing the weighted values by adding the weighted value of each data point and the data points were divided by the sum of the weights for each data point.

Table 7: Cross-tabulation of student-supervisor relationship by sex

Variable	Student-Supervisor Relationship		Total
	Structural	Supportive	
Male	41	24	65
Female	25	17	42
Total	66	41	107

The analysis by cross-tabulation indicated that the majority 66(62%) of master's students perceived student-supervisor relationship in IEPA as mainly structural type of relationship with 41 (38%) indicating a supportive form of relationship. In regards to sex of respondents, most males (41) representing 64% supported a structural form of relationship while 24 respondents, accounting for 36% indicated a supportive type of student-supervisor relationship. For females, whereas 25 respondents, representing nearly 60% perceived structural relationship, 17 (40%) of them indicated a supportive relationship.

As shown in Table 7, most students were in agreement that the nature of the supervisory relationship that exists at IEPA during thesis writing are structural and supportive relationships. The supervisors, however, strike structural relationships ($M=2.64$) with students more than supportive relationships ($M=2.57$) during thesis supervision. The results also revealed that supervisors who had structural relationship with students adopted more of the laissez-faire approach ($M=2.61$). Furthermore, the findings (Table 5) of the study showed that supervisors who foster a supportive student-supervisor relationship during thesis writing also tend to employ a contractual approach ($M=2.58$) more than a pastoral approach (2.56).

Generally, the results of this study affirm a study by Mainhard et al., 2009; Van der Rijst, (2009) that supervisors who adopt this approach provide

minimal oversight to the students and allow them to do the research almost by themselves. In situations where supervisors use this approach to supervise students throughout the study project, students, especially those who cannot be independent in the thesis stage, suffer in the research process due to a lack of adequate guidance from the supervisor and inexperience on the side of the student and this can affect their completion of thesis.

Gatfield (2005), believes ideally, the laissez-faire supervisory method is recommended in the initial stages of a research project, when a student is exploring potential thesis topics, minimal supervision is required at the beginning of a research project when a student is still searching for a thesis topic and may not necessitate significant guidance or assistance from the supervisor. The results of the study suggest that the laissez-faire supervisory method is combined with other supervisory methods like the contractual method, which dominates the supportive supervisory type at IEPA. This implies that supervisors at the IEPA vary their supervisory relationship contingent on the research strength of the students and prevailing circumstances.

Research Question 2: What are students' expectations of supervisors during thesis supervision at IEPA

The study aimed to gather insights from respondents regarding their expectations of the supervisory relationship during thesis supervision. The results from the study are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Students' expectations of supervisors during thesis writing

Expectations	Students' expectations from supervisors	
	M	SD
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to monitor my progress periodically to ensure that I am working on the thesis on time	3.42	1.28
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to equip me with academic writing skills	3.42	1.32
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to communicate with me continuously during my thesis stage	3.27	1.39
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to provide timely/helpful feedback on my draft	3.24	1.56
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to supply me with suitable learning materials	3.18	1.29
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to advise /negotiate with me regarding any collaborative publication during or at the end of my graduate studies	3.06	1.39
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to provide me guidance for learning the research process, particularly for specific activities to be performed and how to complete them	3.03	1.29
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to introduce me to the general procedures of conducting research	2.96	1.29
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to introduce me to a variety of learning resources/academic forums such as seminars, and conferences for opportunities for intellectual growth	2.91	1.49
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to be interested in my research topic	2.85	1.25
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to assist me in acquiring ethical approval on time for my research	2.82	1.21
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to counsel me on my difficulties outside of academics	2.79	1.39
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to provide me with guidance on the formal requirements of the entire MPhil	2.78	1.17
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to provide me with an orientation to the institute/faculty's expectations of me	2.58	1.15
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to advise me on the estimated time I need to finish my thesis	2.48	1.30
I expect(ed) my supervisor(s) to help me select a research topic	2.45	1.20
Overall mean	2.95	

Source: Field Data (2023).

From Table 8, on average, the MPhil students at the IEPA agreed (M=2.95) to have different expectations from their supervisors during the thesis stage of their studies. Specifically, students agreed that they expected

their supervisors to monitor their progress regularly to ensure that they completed it on time ($M=3.4$, $SD=1.28$). The students also agreed that they expected their supervisors to communicate with them regularly ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.39$) and to provide timely and/or useful comments on their draft theses ($M=3.24$, $SD=1.56$).

The study also revealed that students agreed that they expected their supervisors to provide them with appropriate learning materials, such as articles, to guide them in the writing of their thesis ($M=3.18$, $SD=1.29$), and to guide them towards collaboration for publication of parts of the thesis during or at the end of the thesis ($M=3.06$, $SD=1.39$). This means that students wish to actively participate in the publication of portions of their thesis.

The results on students' expectations of supervisors are in line with Nulty et al. (2009) who found that most MPhil students have some expectations from their supervisors, especially in choosing a research topic which oftentimes becomes a significant obstacle for many MPhil students. The results also agree with Friedrich-Nel and Mackinnon, (2014) that most MPhil students expect their advisors to advise them on a topic with appropriate intellectual depth and can be investigated within the university-mandated deadlines. Similarly, the results align with Nulty et al. (2009) that graduate students expect supervisors to advise them on relevant topics and the estimated amount of time required for research. In addition to the existing literature referenced above, the present study reveals that MPhil students also expect supervisors to monitor thesis progress on agreed periods to ensure steady progress.

It is interesting to note from the findings in Table 8 that the MPhil students expect supervisors to assume the bulk of thesis writing responsibility. Similar findings have been reported by Stappenbelt and Basu (2019) in their study of student-supervisor-university expectation alignment in the undergraduate engineering thesis. Their findings revealed that most supervisors expect the thesis to be published after the defence. Hence, the supervisors assume most of the thesis responsibilities to ensure that thesis findings are publishable. Notwithstanding, Stappenbelt and Basu (2019) acknowledged that supervisors who meet students' expectations and actively involve themselves in students' thesis writing throughout the research phase result in high success in thesis completion. This study's result implies that if supervisors perform their supervisory roles in addition to meeting the MPhil students' expectations, the thesis completion rate can be enhanced among MPhil students at the IEPA of the UCC.

Research Question 3: What are supervisors' expectations of students during thesis supervision at IEPA?

In any purposeful adventure, there are some expectations of patrons in pursuing that activity and the decision to continue or rescind the opportunity the next time will be determinant of their needs met. This study sought also examine what supervisors expect from their students during thesis supervision which will determine the outcome of a successful completion or not. The results in Table 9 revealed what thesis supervisors in IEPA expected from their students during thesis writing.

Table 9: Expectations of supervisors from students during the thesis writing stage

Expectations		
	M	SD
I expect(ed) my student(s) to write a good thesis so they can publish their findings	4.78	0.44
I expect (ed) my student(s) to be self-motivated towards their thesis	4.78	0.44
I expect(ed) my student(s) to have periodic meeting schedules with me to ensure thesis progress	4.78	0.67
I expect(ed) my student(s) to be dedicated/committed to their thesis work	4.67	0.50
I expect(ed) my student(s) to complete their thesis on time	4.56	0.73
I expect(ed) my student(s) to be capable of identifying research problems/and formulating the research questions	4.56	0.73
I expect(ed) my student(s) to accept criticism/feedback on their thesis drafts	4.44	0.53
I expect(ed) my student(s) to have adequate academic writing skills	4.33	0.71
I expect(ed) my student(s) to become independent, mature scholars capable of conducting their studies	4.33	0.87
I expect(ed) my student(s) to be capable of developing their research methodology	4.33	0.71
I expect(ed) my student(s) to possess good knowledge of research methods	4.33	0.71
I expect(ed) my student(s) to be able to study extensively the pertinent literature about their research problem	4.22	0.67
<i>Weighted mean</i>	4.51	

Source: Field Data (2023).

The results presented in Table 9 revealed that generally, supervisors have a high ($M=4.51$) expectation of students in writing their thesis. Specifically, supervisors highly expected thesis students to write a good thesis that can be published ($M=4.78$, $SD=0.44$), motivate themselves in the writing of their thesis ($M=4.78$, $SD=0.44$) and periodically schedule meetings with supervisors to ensure that their thesis is progressing ($M=4.78$, $SD=0.44$).

Additionally, supervisors also highly expected their thesis students to be able to identify/formulate research problems/research questions ($M=4.56$,

SD=0.73) and have adequate academic writing skills ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.71$). Again, supervisors expect student(s) to become independent, mature scholars capable of conducting their studies ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.8$), be capable of developing their research methodology ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.71$) to possess good knowledge of research methods ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.71$) and be able to study extensively the pertinent literature about their research problem ($M= 4.22$, $SD =0.67$)

The study's findings reveal that supervisors at IEPA have high expectations for MPhil thesis students, aligning with previous research (Friedrich-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014). They expect students to possess attributes like self-motivation, problem-solving skills, creativity, and effective communication, enabling independent work with minimal supervision (Adkins, 2009).

Supervisors anticipate students to demonstrate research capabilities, including identifying research problems, formulating research questions, and developing methodology (Halse, 2011). They also expect extensive literature consultation (Litalien & Guay, 2015). These expectations ensure students produce high-quality research.

Publication of student thesis research is also expected, despite not being universally mandated (Hassan et al., 2009; Friedrich-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014). Supervisors collaborate with students to prepare articles for academic conferences and workshops (Lessing & Schulze, 2003). This study confirms IEPA supervisors at UCC share similar expectations.

Publication of a student thesis is one of the expectations most supervisors have of their MPhil students. Even though many universities do

not mandate MPhil students to publish articles before graduation, some supervisors expect students to publish their research work (Hassan et al., 2009; Friedrich-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014). To ensure this, most supervisors work with their students to prepare articles that can be presented at academic conferences, workshops, and the like (Lessing & Schulze, 2003). The present study confirms Lessing and Schulze (2003) by revealing that supervisors at the IEPA of UCC also expect students to publish their research.

Moreover, the study's findings support previous reports that most supervisors have expectations for students to complete their thesis on time to earn their degrees (Litalien & Guay, 2015; Pole et al., 1997). In line with prior research, the study's outcomes reveal that supervisors generally expect students to dedicate and commit themselves to writing of thesis to facilitate early completion. The results imply that the supervisors at IEPA expect students to remain committed and responsible throughout the research phase to enhance early completion.

Research Question 4: To What Extent Does the Student-Supervisor Relationship Influence Thesis Completion?

This section sought to present the influence of the various types of student-supervisor relationships on the master's thesis completion at IEPA. This was achieved by first determining the timely thesis completion followed by correlation and binary logistic regression respectively analysing the association and influence of the student-supervisor relationship on timely thesis completion.

Timely thesis completion among masters' students at the IEPA

Table 10 shows that more than two-thirds (66.4%) of MPhil students at IEPA took more than two years to obtain their master's degree.

Table 10: Timely thesis completion among masters' students at IEPA

Responses	I completed my master's study within two years	
	Freq.	%
Agree	36	33.6
Disagree	71	66.4

Source: Field Data (2023).

Similar findings have been reported elsewhere (Albertyn et al., 2008), and the study's results indicate that most MPhil students at IEPA do not graduate within the scheduled duration.

Correlation Between Student-Supervisor Relationship and Timely Thesis Completion

The study tested the relationship between student-supervisor relationship and early thesis completion among IEPA students. The analysis, as shown in Table (11) found that there is a statistically significant relationship between student-supervisor relationship and early thesis completion ($N = 105$; $X^2 = 13.50$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the student-supervisor relationship and early thesis completion. This implies that a favourable student and supervisor relationship leads to timely completion of thesis among master's students.

Table 11: Relationship between student-supervisor relationship and early thesis completion

Variable	Category	Completion within two years		Total	Test Statistic
		Yes	No		
Student-supervisor relationship	Least agree	9	4	13	$X^2 = 13.50$
	Lowly agree	12	7	19	df = 4
	Agree	28	17	45	P = 0.003
	Highly agree	4	8	12	
	Very highly agree	12	6	18	
	Total	65	40	105	

Source: Field Data (2023)

Influence of Student-Supervisor Relationship on Timely Thesis

Completion

The logistic regression model's goodness-of-fit was evaluated using the Hosmer and Lemeshow test, which resulted in a chi-square value of $\chi^2(1) = 15.67$ and a p-value of 0.68. This suggests that the model fits the data well. Additionally, the model's improvement was assessed utilising the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients, which produced a significant chi-square value of $\chi^2(1) = 19.04$ and a p-value of 0.038. This indicates that incorporating the student-supervisor relationship as a predictor significantly enhances the model's performance, improving its overall accuracy to 73.8%, compared to the 66.7% accuracy of the null model. Moreover, the pseudo- R^2 value of 0.121 suggests that the model accounts for approximately 12.1% of the variability in thesis completion outcomes.

As presented in Table (12), the logistic regression analysis showed a significant coefficient for the student-supervisor relationship ($\beta = 0.20$; $p < 0.05$), demonstrating a statistically significant link between the student-

supervisor relationship and early thesis completion. The analysis also produced an odds ratio (OR) of 1.22 for the supervisory relationship, with a 95% confidence interval (CI) of [0.958, 1.565]. This implies that each additional improvement in the relationship increases the odds of early thesis completion by 1.2 times.

Table 12: Regression Coefficients for student-supervisor relationship on early thesis completion

Model	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% CI	
							UL	LL
Student-supervisor relationship	.202	.125	2.620	1	.006	1.224	.958	1.565
Constant	-3.41	2.515	1.841	1	.175	.033		

Variable(s) entered: Student-supervisor relationship

The result of the present study confirms existing findings in other studies that the student-supervisor relationship is key to fostering timely thesis completion among master students (Koskenoja, 2019; Stappenbelt & Basu, 2019; Thaba-Nkadimene, 2020; Young et al., 2019).

Research Question 5: What are the challenges faced by students and supervisors during thesis supervision?

Here the inductive approach to qualitative analysis was ensured. Data were generated using semi-structured individual interview guide. Concurrently, preliminary analysis occurred, where participants were asked to clarify certain points during the interviews to prevent any misinterpretation. The collected data included audio recordings, and their accompanying captions. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to accurately preserve the participants' original content and intended meanings. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, consistent with Braun and Clarke (2006) and Creswell (2009), to uncover key themes and patterns the process

began with multiple readings of the transcripts to thoroughly familiarize myself with the data. I then identified units of meaning within the data and noted them in the margins of the transcripts. These units of meaning were used to systematically develop categories. Finally, the categories were used to create and name the overarching themes.

The results revealed four challenges faced by the students. These were difficulty in approaching supervisors with thesis draft; a stringent work schedule resulting in infrequent meetings with supervisors; inadequate skill in academic writing; and delay in obtaining the Institutional Review Board's ethical approval.

Theme I: *Students' difficulty in initiating contact with supervisors and fear of presenting an inadequate initial draft*

According to the findings, students were hesitant to approach supervisors because they felt the initial draft of the thesis was not good enough to show to supervisors, and the students would rather avoid embarrassment and unfavourable remarks from supervisors than approach the supervisors at all. This resulted in students' prolonging their thesis writing years. A student indicated that:

"I have that fear of going to see him (supervisor) when I'm not so sure whether what I've done is right or not, so sometimes, I end up delaying so much just to go and see him sometimes, unless he asks me would I come around then now I'll say, okay" (Stu 1). "

Another student added that;

“I also want to make sure that I do a perfect work, like before I went and see him so I end up exhausting a long time working on the thesis”

(Stu 2).

Another cause for difficulty approaching supervisors was unfamiliarity. Some students stated that they had never interacted with their supervisors before, hence, having to approach supervisors whom they have never met became a challenge. To this effect, one student stated that

“Initially, I was finding it difficult to go see my supervisor because of his personality. You know, I was not all that used to him until he started checking up on me, then I gathered the courage to be going to meet him on my work” (Stu 3)

MPhil thesis students facing challenges approaching their supervisors is a well-documented phenomenon. For example, Siddique et al. (2020) found out that most MPhil students are unable to approach their supervisors for several reasons: (1) because the supervisors do not make themselves available, and (2) because the supervisors are overloaded with academic and administrative work that they do not have time for students. While the relevant literature ascribed the difficulty of students approaching supervisors to supervisors' unavailability, the current study discovered the cause to be from students' personal difficulties and perceptions.

Theme II: *Stringent work schedule resulting in infrequent meetings with supervisors*

The data gathered indicated that students, especially those who were working alongside schooling struggled to keep up with work schedules and

meeting schedules with supervisors. The study revealed that students oftentimes missed schedules with supervisors or were unavailable for meeting supervisors due to tight work schedules that require full-time presence at workplaces. A student stated that;

“Because of the tight schedules I had at work, I was not able to meet my supervisor as often as he wanted me to. Sometimes he would call me and fix a date with me to meet with him, but I will end up giving him excuses when the meeting time is due” (Stu 5).

This result is in line with Essuman (2020) who found that employment is one of the causes of delayed thesis completion among MPhil students. According to Essuman, employed students divide their time between work and school. They end up prioritizing work above academics, and eventually step down or spend additional time to complete the thesis. The findings of the study imply that working-class students are more likely to spend a longer period on their thesis, resulting in late thesis completion.

Theme III: Inadequate academic writing skills

The study discovered that another challenge experienced by the MPhil students interviewed was lack of academic writing proficiency. Due to inadequate academic writing skills, students did not feel confident enough to write up their thesis. This resulted in hesitance in booking appointments with supervisors for fear of being queried by supervisors about sections of their thesis. A student shared that;

“We were introduced to the academic writing skills course rather late I remember I had already sent my proposal to my supervisors before the course was mounted for us and even with that there were challenges

with the mode of teaching, usually online. The slides I got later made me realise a lot of writing errors I have made so had to start the whole proposal again” (Stu 4).

“I did not know much about academic writing. Even though I did my term papers and all those things and yes, I passed them, I don't think my academic writing background was that great to enable me to write my thesis” (Stu 5).

Supervisors, on the other hand, required MPhil students to be competent in academic writing to promote easy supervision and prompt, successful thesis completion.

Academic writing is one of the core elements of a successful graduate program, especially at the doctoral level (Itua et al., 2014). The ability to present information and ideas in writing plays an integral role in graduate students' academic and professional success (Aitchison et al., 2012). As a result, most Masters students are expected to have a sufficient level of academic writing skills to successfully traverse the thesis writing process. Also, majority of supervisors liked to work with students who could conceptualize and write good scholarly papers, such as theses and articles (Hassan et al., 2009). Students who lacked such skills frequently struggled to cope with supervisors because they sometimes could not understand what supervisors expect of them and are unable to put it in writing (Gupta et al., 2022). The data indicated some MPhil students at the IEPA failed to complete their theses on time due to insufficient academic writing skills. This necessitates more intensive, discipline-specific training to ensure academic writing success, which can be provided in the form of a formal course

specifically designed for Masters students, with discipline-specific support from faculty members and editing support from English language experts. This will facilitate timely thesis completion among Masters students at IEPA.

Theme IV: *Delay in the Ethical approval of research proposal*

Students interviewed mentioned a delay in gaining approval from the UCC's IRB. According to the students, IRB hampers thesis work because proposal approval from the institution can take up to seven months, and most supervisors are strict on IRB approval. Without the approval, most supervisors will not allow students to proceed from Chapter Three of the thesis. This sentiment is shared by the students in the following words:

“The IRB sometimes take a longer time to approve research proposals. Sometimes the board can take as much as seven months to approve research proposal” (Stu 5).

Another student shared that;

“I also have a challenge with IRB. Cos for me, that has been a major challenge. Apart from my issue with my supervisor, IRB has delayed my work so much. They delayed my approval of proposal for over seven months. I wouldn't blame the delay on my supervisor and I alone, but on IRB too” (Stu 4).

The IRB delays were acknowledged by a supervisor who indicated that *“...this issue of the IRB I think there are delays. It also affects the (thesis) duration. So, the time of waiting (for IRB certification) and all that is usually an issue”* (Sup. 1).

Most countries utilize a form of IRB to ensure that research is conducted ethically and following national and international norms, legislation, or guidelines (Mohamadi et al., 2014). At the UCC, the IRB ensures that all research conducted by members of the university comply with research ethics. Consequently, students cannot proceed to do the actual research without approval from the IRB, hence, supervisors' insistence on students obtaining IRB certificates. However, whereas it takes a maximum of four weeks in most Western institutions to obtain IRB certification, the students shared that it could take up to seven months to obtain IRB certification from UCC.

The data above indicated that the procedure of acquiring the IRB and the time it takes the committee to give the certificate takes a longer amount of time, which adds up to the students spending more time on their thesis.

Challenges faced by Supervisors during Thesis Supervision

In the view of the supervisors, students' dependency on ghostwriters, supervisor-dependency syndrome and low competence in the use of technologies (MS Word "Comment" and track changes) for effecting corrections were the major challenges that mired the student-supervisor relationships and impeded timely thesis completion.

The theme I: *Dependency on ghostwriters*

Supervisors in the study shared that some MPhil students employ ghostwriters for their thesis because of a lack of thesis writing skills or busy work schedules. The supervisors shared that the students met with them for discussion on the thesis. Afterwards, the students would meet with the ghostwriters to explain what they had discussed with the supervisors for them

to write. According to the supervisors interviewed, most of the students came back to them with drafts that looked different from what they had discussed with the students. One of the supervisors indicated that;

“One (challenge) I’ll talk about is sometimes dependency on the ghostwriters. Ghostwriters, I’ll say, are the people who, wherever they are, write a thesis for people. When a student brings her thesis realize and you realize that this work looks like work you’ve seen somewhere before or you haven’t had a discussion with the students on how literature methodology should go but then there are certain already made things that, you know, are not coming from the student. And sometimes the rate at which the feedback comes, you are like, oh, the questions and answers flow, you realize that the student is not on top”.
Sup. 2).

From the perspective of the supervisors at the IEPA, ghostwriters

“Are the people who, wherever they are, write a thesis for people” (Sup.3).

Theme II: Supervisor-dependency syndrome

One supervisor indicated that;

“I have had one MPhil student, I think it was MEd thesis rather, Yeah, so that student was bringing stuff on his thesis and when I gave him suggestions as to what he ought to do, he would go and bring the thing again. Finally, we were able to finish the thesis. When he brought the final work, I read through it and saw there were a lot of inconsistencies and others. I made a suggestion and asked him to go and make the final suggestion and bring it. He went after a month and

came back with the same, had to almost every time aid him with everything. (sup3).

Contrary to the findings of the study, other studies have found that the expectations of students from their supervisors is to be guided rather than to write a thesis for them. A study by Carlín (2013) found that students believed that the supervisor should motivate them in writing the thesis, help them select a promising topic, and provide advice on the research design, data collection and data analysis. In sum, candidates expect guidance in the writing of the entire thesis.

According to Carlín, it has been shown that modifying the beliefs of students can have a positive impact on the prompt and effective completion of their theses, thereby leading to an improvement in the overall graduation rate. While the study findings indicate that students have expectations to receive guidance from supervisors in the process of writing their thesis, it is not advisable to rely solely on supervisors, contrary to the results of the current study. The present study's findings suggest that a selected group of MPhil students at IEPA hold higher expectations of their supervisors during the thesis writing process, thereby impeding the timely completion of their thesis.

Theme III: Low competence in the use of MS Word track changes for effecting corrections

The study's findings indicated that some students had challenge in making their corrections using MS Word track changes. Due to this, some students couldn't continue working on their thesis while away from campus and are unable to meet with their supervisors in person. Supervisors described this condition as concerning and a significant contributor to thesis delays since

students take longer to effect corrections on their thesis, which leads to taking longer to make changes to the thesis. As a result, these students spend more time on thesis completion than is required of them. One supervisor shared that

“...some [students], also in some few cases, they even find it very difficult to remove the comments. When I only say track changes, it will be worse off. I normally use the comment, where you can just right-click and then delete or dismiss a comment.” (Sup.1).

“Some students who stay on campus and can utilize the library even surprise me most when they cannot effect simple changes on MS Word. They end up spending too much time on their thesis because of simple thing like making technical corrections” (Sup.2).

Unlike during course work, majority of students do not reside on campus permanently during thesis writing. As a result, email correspondence between students and supervisors becomes the ideal technique to ensure regular communication between students and supervisors to keep the thesis moving forward. Students submit their revised thesis to their supervisors, who subsequently provide suggestions and inputs into the thesis utilizing MS Word track changes, which is the most common among the supervisors. Supervisors then return the reviewed paper to the students, expecting them to review the supervisors' critiques and inputs, accept or reject them, and proceed with the thesis.

Research Question 6: How are the challenges faced by students and supervisors during thesis writing managed?

When asked how they managed the challenges they face in student-supervisor relationships during thesis writing, both supervisors and students

shared insights that were captured in three themes: self-motivation, virtual meetings and establishing good rapport.

Theme I: *Self-motivation and encouragement*

According to the students interviewed, they sometimes reach a point in thesis writing where moving forward seems perilous, flinching back denotes cowardice, and standing still feel suicidal; their only remaining option is to persevere. Students self-motivate by concentrating on the benefits and opportunities they will derive from having an MPhil certificate and the fact that, if they have no intention of stepping down, they must complete the thesis regardless of the circumstances. This was indicated by one of the students who stated that

“Every day, I tell myself that if I don't sit up, follow and complete what I discuss with my supervisor, and provide timely feedback, no one else will do it for me, and I will delay my work. Therefore, I was always working on my thesis and in constant contact with my supervisor. I was also aware that once I complete my thesis and obtain my certificate, I will be promoted to a higher position at my place of employment. These are a few of the factors that motivated me to complete my thesis. Even though I did not complete within the allotted two years, I did so regardless” (Stu. 2).

The excerpt from the students aligns with a quote from Allie Brosh “Most people can motivate themselves to do things simply by knowing that those things need to be done...” During the arduous process of writing the thesis, students identified with the aforementioned quotation. The result of the study agrees with Montalvo and Torres (2004) cited in Holmes et al. (2010) who concluded that students who pursue and adopt identifiable learning goals

use deeper cognitive strategies on the way to academic achievement. The results also agree with Schulze (2012) that for master's students to complete their thesis on time, supervisors must provide encouragement and incentive to facilitate the practical completion of master's studies. This implies that supervisors must constantly encourage thesis students to incentivize them to complete their thesis on time.

The supervisors, on the other hand, encouraged students to work diligently to complete their theses, particularly when they observe students giving up. Some of the supervisors tell their students *"I don't like any step-down issue here. Once you have opted for MPhil, you must do it. It is doable"* (Sup.3).

Some supervisors demonstrate a level of concern for their students that extends beyond the scope of their thesis work. They sometimes establish relationships with students that resemble those of siblings and parents. This is because students may encounter circumstances that extend beyond their academic pursuits or the composition of their theses. A supervisor shared that;

"Once the student becomes your supervisee, you have to take the person as your family. I remember there was an occasion when I had a student who had issues with childbirth. They've been married for so many years, the child is not coming. Through probing, I got to know and we discussed it a lot. At the time I was signing her thesis, just yesterday, she was pregnant with a second child. So sometimes, you know, help them to open up. You also share your issues and your challenges to encourage the person on the thesis" (Sup. 1).

The establishment of such a relationship fosters a less formal relationship between students and their supervisors during the process of thesis writing. This, in turn, enhances the students' ability to readily contact their supervisors, thus facilitating effective interaction. Consequently, this promotes consistent progress in thesis writing, ultimately leading to the timely completion of the thesis. This is manifested by greater efforts in accomplishing academic tasks and avoiding external distractions.

Theme II: *Organising virtual meetings for distant students*

The research findings indicate that in certain circumstances, supervisors may find it imperative to arrange virtual sessions with students who face significant limitations in terms of time and geographical proximity. Students of this nature sometimes face challenges in arranging face-to-face meetings with their supervisors. Consequently, they must make alternative arrangements with their supervisors to organize online sessions to discuss feedback, corrections, and the way forward. Supervisors employ this strategy to mitigate the impediment posed by constrained work schedules on the advancement of thesis work.

A supervisor shared that;

“I project the work on the slides. I have a projector in my office. I project the work and then we discuss the issues about the work. We go from page to page. Where I wanted to go quickly, I prefer the students coming in with their work and then we just project it and then do the corrections in the work with them. So that right after that, I just forward the work to the student and that helps me sustain” (Sup. 2).

Theme III: *Establishing good rapport with supervisors*

Students interviewed in the study admitted that from the beginning of the thesis when they were first assigned supervisors, they were not having that rapport with supervisors. Consequently, they could not approach their supervisors and this affected the progress of the thesis from the initial stage by delaying the thesis. One student indicated that

“Yeah, and it's not that easy to call your supervisor. Some people might say it easy, but to me it's not that easy to just call this person and be like, I want to come to you and all that. I'm not used to talking to people like that. Yes, it's really difficult because it's the first time something that I have had to communicate with a supervisor directly on academic work. So, it's, it's made it difficult for me to build that rapport to quickly schedule meetings with him. So, because of that, I delayed a lot” (Stu. 1).

The analysis of the study revealed that, a significant factor that hindered students from establishing an initial rapport with their supervisors was the perception some had about supervisors. One student expressed that

“Initially, I was finding it difficult to go see my supervisor because of his personality” (Stu. 2).

Such students are unlikely to approach supervisors on their own, even though it is the student's responsibility to contact supervisors after they have been assigned to the students and their contact information made available. These students would rather have supervisors contact them first before they can create a relationship with them. While some supervisors would expect the students to contact them first, others will go beyond established protocols to

contact the students first to help students start interacting with supervisors.

This was one participant's experience who shared that;

“You know, I was not all that used to him [supervisor] until he started checking up on me then I gathered the courage to be going to meet him on my work” (Stu. 2).

The result of the present study conforms with Fetene and Tamrat (2021) who found that a positive student-supervisor rapport is the most influencing factor in thesis completion among graduate students

“One of my challenges was my initial hesitance to go and see the man Until I built a good relationship with him then I could approach him regarding my work” (Stu. 3).

This is because rapport with supervisors ensures that the students receive adequate guidance and periodic monitoring of students' theses (Manathunga, 2007). In implication, good rapport between students and supervisors is key to ensuring timely thesis completion.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the study, synthesizing the key findings and presenting the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the research.

Overview of the Study

The study assessed the influence of the student-supervisor relationship during thesis writing on thesis completion. Specifically, the study aimed at ascertaining the nature of relationship students have with their supervisors, students and supervisors' expectations of each other during the supervisory period which can cause timely/untimely completion of thesis. Subsequently, challenges students and supervisors faced in the supervisory relationship and ways these challenges were effectively managed were also discussed. Suggestions were also made on how stakeholders could avert the conclusions made on the findings to inform strategies for improving timely completion rates among postgraduate students, this research was guided by the following questions:

1. What types of student-supervisor relationships exist at IEPA?
2. What are students' expectations of their supervisors during thesis supervision at IEPA?
3. What are supervisors' expectations of their students during thesis supervision at IEPA?
4. To what extent does the student-supervisor relationship contribute to the timely completion of thesis at IEPA?

5. What are the challenges faced by students and supervisors in the supervisor relationship during thesis writing?
6. How do students and supervisors deal with the challenges they face in the student-supervisor relationships during thesis writing?

The study reviewed literature under the concept of postgraduate supervision, students' expectation of the supervision, supervisors' expectations of the supervision, challenges faced in the supervisory practice that contributed to the delay in completion and finally how the relationship was enhanced to ensure successful completion. This study integrated theoretical frameworks and employed a concurrent mixed-methods design to provide a comprehensive insight into the student-supervisor dynamic and its impact on thesis completion, capturing both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. This approach helped to ensure that the dearth and in-depth views of students and supervisors were obtained. This study did not only produce a robust description and interpretation of data but made quantitative results more understandable and enabled applicability of small-sample qualitative findings. Thus, the design is considered appropriate to juxtapose the nature and expectations of students and supervisors of the supervisory relationship with the challenges they faced that caused delay in thesis completion.

The research population constituted the following;

- a. Regular MPhil students of IEPA
- b. MPhil thesis supervisors at IEPA

The data was analyzed using percentages, means, standard deviations, binary logistic regression, Pearson product-moment correlation and thematic and content analyses.

Key Findings

Research Question 1: What type of student-supervisor relationships exist at IEPA?

The objective of this question was to understand the views of MPhil students regarding the types of student-supervisor relationships that exist in IEPA. This study found that the types of supervisory relationships that exist during thesis writing in IEPA are structural and supportive. However, the supervisory relationship that exist more is structural relationship.

Research Question 2: What are students' expectations of their supervisors during thesis supervision at IEPA?

This research question sought to find out students' expectations of their supervisors during thesis supervision at IEPA. The findings showed that MPhil students highly agreed that they expected their supervisors to monitor their progress in writing the thesis regularly to ensure that they completed it on time, communicate with them regularly and to provide timely and/or useful comments on their draft theses.

Research Question 3: What are supervisors' expectations of their students during thesis supervision at IEPA?

The findings from research question 3 showed that the supervisors highly agreed that they had high expectations of students during thesis supervision. They expected MPhil students to be self-motivated in the writing process, write a good publishable thesis and periodically schedule meetings with their supervisors to ensure thesis progress.

Research Question 4: To what extent does the student-supervisor relationship contribute to the timely completion of thesis at IEPA?

The fourth research question sought to find the association between the supervisory relationship and timely completion and consequently the extent of influence. The study revealed a low positive association between timely thesis completion and student-supervisor relationship. Also, the study showed that the correlation between supportive relationship and timely thesis completion was statistically significant whereas that between structural relationship and timely thesis completion was statistically insignificant.

Research Question 5: What are the challenges faced by students and supervisors in a student-supervisor relationship during thesis writing?

The results of the study showed that, the major setback students encountered in their relationship with supervisors during thesis writing were difficulty in approaching supervisors with thesis draft, students' stringent work schedules, inadequate academic writing skills and delay in ethical approval by Institutional Review Board. The supervisors, on the other hand, faced challenges such as students' dependency on ghost writers, supervisor-dependency syndrome and students' low competence in the use of technologies (MS Word "Comment" and track changes) for effecting correction.

Research Question 6: How do students and supervisors deal with the challenges they face in student-supervisor relationships during thesis writing?

Findings of this study showed that the challenges faced by both students and supervisors in the supervisory relationship during thesis writing

could be managed through self-motivation by students, setting up alternative schedules like virtual meetings for students and enhancing communication rapport between students and their supervisors.

Conclusions

The results of the study showed that the type of supervisory relationship during thesis supervision plays a role in thesis completion and consequently graduation.

Also, the expectations both students and supervisors have of each other during the supervision process plays a key role in determining the interaction that will exist and consequently ensure timely/untimely completion. The study also found that students are major stakeholders in timely completion of thesis.

It was discovered that most of the challenges faced in the supervisory relationship were student centered which meant to ensure thesis completion much was dependent on the students than supervisors. It was found that students' personal factors, high dependency on supervisors' support were key in delaying thesis on time. Some institutional factors like inadequate academic skills training and delay in ethical clearance by the Institutional Review Board also accounted for the delay.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings and conclusions, a set of targeted recommendations is presented to optimize the relationship that exist between supervisors and their research students to facilitate successful completion of the MPhil program. These recommendations are organized into three distinct categories, addressing the roles and responsibilities of students, supervisors, and IEPA.

For Students

1. Students should be proactive in the thesis writing process and understand that thesis contributes to their professional development and thus must strive for excellence.
2. Individuals considering graduate studies should familiarize themselves with the program's academic expectations and professional requirements to ensure a successful and fulfilling experience.
3. It is also in the interest of student to brace up for the psychological and physical stamina required for successful completion of thesis.

For Supervisors

1. In facilitating timely thesis completion, supervisors should foster a supportive and approachable relationship with their students, encouraging open communication and creating a safe environment where students feel comfortable seeking guidance and addressing concerns.
2. Supervisors must clearly communicate their expectations of the supervisory relationship to students at the beginning of the thesis supervision.

For IEPA

1. The institute could seek approval from the University's review board to set up an Internal Review Board to facilitate efficient and early access to ethical clearance.
2. The institute should also provide some structured thesis support systems like peer review groups, periodic progress reports to equip and track student progress respectively.

3. The institute should also organize interactive sessions, workshops to allow for collaborative ideas on how supervision methods could be enhanced.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. There should also be further studies on the effective implementation of the School of Graduate School policies and guidelines on thesis supervision.
2. To facilitate a more extensive comprehension of the supervisory approaches and its influence on timely thesis completion, a cross-institutional and interdisciplinary replication of this study is strongly recommended.

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX A****Questionnaire for MPhil students**

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

(IEPA)

THE STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP AND ITS INFLUENCE

ON MPhil THESIS COMPLETION AT THE INSTITUTE OF

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

This study aims to collect data on the influence of the student-supervisor relationship and MPhil thesis completion at the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration at the University of Cape Coast. The purpose of this study is to find out the relationship that exists between students and their supervisors during thesis writing and its implication on their completion period. Your information would be secured and your privacy protected. Please take the time to answer the questions

Section A: Demographic characteristics

1. Sex: 1. Male [] 0. Female []
2. Age at last birthday (years).....
3. Year of entry into the program: 1. 2016 [] 2. 2017 [] 3. 2018 [] 4. 2019 [] 5. 2020 []
4. Duration of stay for the entire master's study
5. Marital status: 1. Married [] 2. Single [] 3. Divorced [] 4. Widowed []

Section B: Thesis completion

Kindly indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements by ticking (✓) 1 or 2. 1 represents agree and 2 represents disagree

6.

S/N	Thesis completion	Agreement	
		1	2
1	I completed my master's study within two years.		
2	I spent more than two years studying for my master's degree.		

Section C: Types of the supervisory relationship at the IEPA.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements by ticking under either 1,2,3,4 or 5.

- 1 represents least agree
- 2 represents lowly agree
- 3 represent agree
- 4 represent highly agree
- 5 represents very highly agreed.

7.

Nature of student-supervisor relationship	Level of agreement				
	1	2	3	4	5
Structural relationship					
1. Laissez-faire approach					
My supervisor (s) provide(d) me with very little supervision.					
My supervisor (s) allow(ed) me to do almost every aspect of my thesis by myself.					
2. Directional approach					
My supervisor (s) actively guide(d) me throughout the thesis process.					
My supervisor (s) engage(d) me in regular interactions throughout the thesis process.					
Supportive relationship					
1. Contractual approach					
My supervisor (s) guide(d)/support(ed) me with reading materials to shape my write-up throughout the thesis					

process.					
My supervisor (s) offer(ed) me suggestions/comments to shape my thesis throughout the thesis process.					
2. Pastoral approach					
My supervisor (s) provide(d) me with emotional support such as counselling on my difficulties outside academics, to empower me to complete my thesis.					
My supervisor (s) encourages(d) me regularly to finish my thesis on time.					

Section D: Expectations of Masters' Students during the student-supervisor relationship

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements by ticking under either 1,2,3,4 or 5. 1 represents least agree while 5 represents very highly agree

8.

S/N	Students' expectations of supervisors	Level of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to help me select a research topic.					
2	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to guide me on the entire MPhil's formal requirements.					
3	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to orient me on the institute/ faculty's expectations of me.					
4	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to introduce me to the general research procedures.					
5	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to assist me in acquiring ethical approval on time for my research.					
6	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to advise me on the estimated time I need to finish my research work					
7	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to guide me in learning the research process, particularly for specific activities to be performed and how to complete them.					
8	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to be interested in my					

	research topic.					
9	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to communicate with me continuously during my thesis stage.					
10	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to provide timely/helpful feedback on my draft.					
11	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to deliver critical criticism.					
12	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to supply them with suitable learning materials					
13	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to introduce me to various learning resources/academic forums, such as seminars and conferences, to provide me with opportunities for intellectual growth.					
14	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to advise/negotiate with me regarding any collaborative publication during or at the end of my graduate studies					
15	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to counsel me on my difficulties outside of academics.					
16	I expect(ed) my supervisor (s) to monitor my progress periodically to ensure that I am working on the thesis within the time					

Please tick (✓) the application below concerning question 16

17. How often do/did you expect your meeting schedule with your supervisor(s)?

- a. weekly []
- b.bi-weekly []
- c. monthly []
- d. quarterly []

Thank you for your time.

Interview Guide for MPhil students

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

(IEPA)

Research Topic:]

INFLUENCE OF STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP ON MPhil
THESIS COMPLETION AT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING
AND ADMINISTRATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

Introduction:

Many thanks for accepting to participate in this interview. It will be appropriate to set out some background for this exercise.

Explaining the Research and its Rationale

- The researcher in partial fulfilment of an MPhil degree is conducting this research to ascertain the influence that the relationship students have with supervisors during thesis writing has on MPhil thesis completion at the IEPA at the University of Cape Coast.
- You're assured that your information will be secure, and your privacy protected. Do take the time to answer the questions

Consent

- Please do let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this interview or your rights as a research participant.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

- Kindly prompt me about sensitive issues you are not comfortable to discuss.
- This interview will be recorded and transcribed. Just to reiterate, I assure you that all information that you will provide during this interview will be confidential; only my supervisor and I will have access to it.

- In case anything you say is quoted in the research report, your name or section of work will not be written or mentioned – you will remain anonymous.

Rules:

- Before we begin, I would like to assure you that this interview is not a test so there are no wrong answers and you will not be judged.
- Please feel free to speak about your opinions, concerns and issues, even if you think they are negative.
- The whole interview should last for about 30 to 60 minutes. I would like to record the interview if it is okay with you.

Interview Questions for MPhil student

1. Please can you describe how you deal with the challenges you face in student-supervisor relationships in your thesis writing?
 - a. What are some of the challenges you face(d) in your relationship with supervisor(s) at the research phase of your MPhil studies? Probe on challenges highlighted from the quantitative data.
 - b. How do (did) you overcome/manage the challenges to ensure that you complete your thesis on time?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for Supervisors

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

Research topic:

INFLUENCE OF STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP ON MPhil
THESIS COMPLETION AT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING
AND ADMINISTRATION, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

Explaining the Research and its Rationale

Much grateful for agreeing to participate in this research. It might be helpful to set out a brief background on why we are here to meet up.

In partial fulfilment of an MPhil degree, the researcher is conducting this survey to ascertain the influence of the student-supervisor relationship on MPhil thesis completion at the IEPA at the University of Cape Coast. This research seeks to examine the contribution of the supervisory relationship on the completion of MPhil thesis in IEPA within the stipulated years. All information provided would be well secured.

PART A

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MPhil
SUPERVISORS

1. Gender: Male| ☐ Female| ☐
2. Rank: Dr. ☐ Senior Lecturer| ☐ Associate Professor| ☐ Professor| ☐
3. Years of supervision experience:

PART B: Expectations of Supervisors in the Supervisory Relationship

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements by ticking under either 1,2,3,4, or 5.

1. (1=least agree 2=lowly agree 3=agree 4= highly agree 5=very highly agree)

S N	Supervisors' expectations of students	Level of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I expect(ed) my student(s) to be self-motivated toward their thesis.					
2	I expect(ed)my student (s) to possess good knowledge of research methods.					
3	I expect(ed)my student to be capable of identifying research problems/and formulating the research questions.					
4	I expect(ed) students to be capable of developing their research methodology.					
5	I expect(ed) my student(s) to be able to study extensively/and investigate the pertinent literature about their research problem.					
6	I expect(ed) that students will be willing to accept and act on feedback regarding their thesis drafts.					
7	I expect(ed) my student(s) to be dedicated/committed to their thesis work.					
8	I expect(ed)my student supervisor (s) to expect(ed) students to do a good thesis so they can publish their findings.					
9	I expect(ed)my student(s) to become independent, mature scholars capable of conducting their studies.					
10	I expect my students to have adequate academic writing skills					

11	I expect(ed) my students to complete their thesis on time.					
12.	I expect(ed) my students to have periodic meeting schedules with me to ensure thesis progress.					

Kindly tick the applicable below concerning question 12

13. How often do/did you expect meeting schedules with your student(s)

a. weekly| [☐]

b.bi-weekly [☐]

c. monthly [☐]

d. quarterly [☐]

Thank you for participating in this study.

Interview Guide for Supervisors

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

(IEPA)

Research Topic:

INFLUENCE OF STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP ON MPhil
THESIS COMPLETION AT INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION(IEPA) IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAPE COAST.

Introduction:

Many thanks for accepting to participate in this interview. It will be appropriate to set out some background for this exercise.

Explaining the Research and its Rationale

- The researcher in partial fulfilment of an MPhil degree is conducting this research to ascertain influence that thesis supervisory relationship has on completion of MPhil thesis at the IEPA in the University of Cape Coast.
- You are assured that your information will be secure, and your privacy protected. Do take the time to answer the questions

Consent

- In case of any questions, clarifications or with respect to your right as a participant about this interview, kindly let me know.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity**
 - You can please decide not to talk about sensitive issues if you are not comfortable.

- This interview will be recorded and transcribed. Just to reiterate, I assure you that all information that you will provide during this interview will be confidential; only my supervisor and I will have access to it.

In case anything you say is quoted in the research report, your name or section of work will not be written or mentioned – you will remain anonymous.

Rules:

- Before we begin, I would like to assure you that this interview is not a test so there are no wrong answers and you will not be judged.
- Please feel free to speak about your opinions, concerns and issues, even if you think they are negative.
- The whole interview should last for about 20 to 30 minutes. I would like to record the interview if it is okay with you.

Interview Questions for Supervisors

How do supervisors deal with the challenges they face in student-supervisor relationships during thesis writing?

1. Please can you describe how you deal with the challenges you face in student-supervisor relationships in your thesis writing?
 - a. What are some of the challenges you face(d) in your relationship with supervisor(s) at the research phase of your MPhil studies? *Probe on challenges highlighted from the quantitative data.*
 - b. How do (did) you overcome/manage the challenges to ensure that your students complete their thesis on time?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C

Ethical clearance

Dinah Adjoo Otoo
University Post Office
Cape Coast
6th March, 2023

The Chairman
Institutional Review Board
University of Cape coast

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE FORM

I write to kindly request for ethical clearance form from your office to enable me to formally request for your clearance before I collect data for my study in the University of Cape Coast. I am a final year MPhil student of the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (I.E.P.A) working on 'THE INFLUENCE OF STUDENT SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP IN THESIS COMPLETION IN IEPA IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST'

The form can be forwarded to my email address: mamiadjowa2203@gmail.com

Counting on your consideration.

Thank you.

Yc 

.....

Dinah Adjoo Otoo

0242512273

Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
University of Cape Coast

Cape Coast

8th March, 2023.

The Chairman
The institutional Review Board
University of Cape Coast Cape
Coast.

Dear Sir,

SUPERVISOR'S CONSENT LETTER

I write to confirm that Dinah Otoo is an M.Phil. student of IEPA of whom I am her supervisor. Dina has completed her Proposal on the topic: *the influence of student-supervisor relationship on mphil thesis completion at the institute of educational planning and administration in the University of Cape Coast*.

In addition to the thesis proposal, she has completed research instruments for the field work and awaiting an ethical clearance to proceed with the pilot study and the eventual data collection.

I humbly recommend that any necessary support Dina is seeking from your outfit to enable her proceed with her research should be granted to her.

I count on your co-operation and assistance.



Yours faithfully
Ansah Francis (PhD) 0559276156/0506872349
francis.ansah@ucc.edu.gh

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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31ST JULY, 2023

Ms Dinah Adjoa Otoo

Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

University of Cape Coast

Dear Ms Otoo

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CES/2023/06)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research on **Influence of Student-Supervisor Relationship on Thesis Completion in IEPA in the University of Cape Coast**. This approval is valid from **31st July, 2023** to **29th July, 2024**. You may apply for an extension of ethical approval if the study lasts for more than 12 months.

Please note that any modification to the project must first receive renewal clearance from the UCCIRB before its implementation. You are required to submit a periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

Kofi F. Amuquandoh

Ag. Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST