

# Students' Perceptions of Postgraduate Research Supervision at Botswana Open University

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## Abstract

Research supervision in higher education is considered essential in promoting lifelong learning and the creation of knowledge. At Botswana Open University (BOU) research supervision is conducted at a distance. However, this mode of supervision is not without its challenges. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of students on research supervision in three master's programmes namely: Master of Education (Educational Leadership), Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Commonwealth Executive Master in Public Administration. The problem was that despite graduate students being allocated supervisors there continued to be a significant number of students who fail to complete their research on time or even failed to complete their programme of study due to the incomplete dissertation. This study was situated within the theory of Transactional Distance by Moore (1991). The study adopted a qualitative approach to gather data and purposive sampling was preferred to gather data from students who were in their final year of the identified programmes. A thematic approach comprising students- supervisor relations, supervision models, and research support was adopted for analysing the data. Some of the key findings revealed that students encountered a series of challenges regarding supervision, indicating that their experiences were varied. There were variations in student supervisor relations and student research support for the different programmes. Education students had a positive supervision experience while Business students indicated having had challenges with their supervision. In conclusion, the study recommends possible strategies that could enhance graduate research supervision experience and student research completion.

**Keywords:** research experience; supervision relations; postgraduate research; Botswana Open University (BOU)

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Progressio  
<https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/Progressio>  
Volume 42 | 2021 | #10001 | 18 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2663-5895/10001>  
ISSN 2663-5895 (Online), ISSN 0256-8853 (Print)  
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## Introduction

Postgraduate research supervision is one of the core components of academic work in higher education. Supervisors are perceived as helping graduate students to engage in the creation of knowledge in the areas they have identified for their research. Research Supervision is not always a smooth exercise as it comes with challenges since it involves human interactions. Perceptions and expectations between students and supervisors may vary due to factors such as culture, attitude, resources, and many others that this study is not intending to focus on.

Botswana Open University (BOU) offers three taught ODL master's programmes namely: Master of Education-Educational Leadership, Commonwealth Executive Master in Business Administration and Commonwealth Executive Master in Public Administration. These programmes have a research component and are offered through open and distance methodologies. The programmes are technology-mediated with a duration of a minimum of two years and a maximum of five years. It was noted that despite the provision of online resources to augment students' research for their resources, the University still experienced low completion rates due to incomplete dissertations. This raised a cause for concern, which necessitated the need for this study to establish the cause for this observation from the student's perspective. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into students' perceptions of research supervision processes to inform decisions relating to research and the completion of master's programmes. This paper, therefore, explores the perceptions of students on their postgraduate research supervision and the complex processes involved in the successful completion of the Master's level dissertations at BOU in the ever-changing and complex area of graduate research.

## Literature Review

Literature on research supervision is based on research surveys and or interviews with supervisors and students (Dysthe 2002; Donnelly 2013; Qureshi 2016). Research supervision in some disciplines is conceptualised as an individual activity between the supervisor and student, a relationship often considered vulnerable (Dysthe and Breistein 1999, Deem and Brehony 2000). Research supervision is a social interaction between two people, in this case, the student and supervisor, working together towards the achievement of the same objectives despite them possibly having divergent views (Zaheer and Munir 2020). However, it takes a long time for the student to establish a good rapport with the supervisor due to this transactional distance, hence the perceived frustrations (Zaheer and Munir 2020). Literature has revealed that during the supervision process there is evidence of the students' overdependence on the supervisor, lack of ownership, and mismatch of personalities experienced by both supervisor and the students. In another context, the issue of power relation impacted significantly the supervisor-student relationship (Johnson et al. 2000; Lee 2007). Stacey and Fountain (2001) as cited in (Zaheer and Munir 2020) state that power and status relations cannot

be easily perceived in DL. It may often distort the element of respect associated with the teacher. However, literature also cautions that during supervision, it is important that students' independence in conducting research should not be compromised (Drennan and Clarke 2009).

Even though postgraduate supervision traditionally has been on an individual basis, development in research indicates that new approaches are being developed to enhance student research supervision to cope with the expanding student numbers, and the diminishing ratio of supervisors to students (Donnelly 2013). It is observed that many students engaged in master's research study fail to complete in time due to challenges of supervision. A study by Dysthe (2002) documented weaknesses in individual supervision and recognised the value of a collective supervision tradition. It was revealed that students undertaking group supervision regarded the support as enhancing individual supervision. It is argued that the supervisory process is prone to problems of communication and understanding that result when not all the terms of reference are made explicit. This could be because of students not being familiar with the language and cultural assumptions inherent in what may be to them, such as a new discipline. It is then likely that a student and the supervisor will have different perceptions of the success and/or failures of the process. Dong (1998) found that students and supervisors often differ in terms of their perceptions of how much support was provided during the dissertation. In her study of science dissertation students, Dong (1998) found that their perceptions of the assistance provided by supervisors were less than what supervisors felt they had provided. This again points to a need to identify student expectations from the outset and to provide clear guidance on the role and input to be provided by the supervisor. In their review of the literature on what students expect from the supervisory relationship, Drennan and Clarke (2009, p485) identified; prompt feedback, providing a balance between direction and independence, regular meetings, appropriate expertise of the supervisor, and ability to suggest alternative designs if problems arose.

It is explained that the variations in supervisory practices are due to the supervisor's notion of research and its purpose of it. For example, a supervisor falling under the functional model of supervision is more concerned with giving students the academic skills of a researcher and his/her practice would be geared toward providing the students with a "toolkit" of research (Zhao 2003). However, Lee (2008) is of the view that does consider research to be a form of teaching but acknowledges the supervisor's personal experiences strongly influence his/her supervisory processes. In this manner, the role of personal experience heavily influences the form the research takes. Making an appointment in this regard, Kerekes and King (2010) concur that supervisors are likely to teach research the way they have been taught. Lee (2008) making a similar point in this regard, observes that some supervisors bring forward their past experiences to graduate supervision. Evidence suggests that supervisors become supervisors without any formal training, hence they tend to draw much from their own supervisory experiences and graduate students (Halse 2011).

## Theoretical Framework

Several theories and models have been used in Open and Distance Learning (ODL), but this study found the theory of Transactional Distance by Moore (1991) to be the most relevant to situate this study. Moore's (1991) theory of transactional distance posits that distance is not simply a geographical separation of learners and teachers, but most importantly is a pedagogical concept. It is a concept describing the universe of the teacher-learner relationship that exists when learners and instructors are separated by space and time. With this separation, there is a psychological and communication space to be crossed to facilitate teaching and learning. The supervision of students is by its nature psychological, and communication related, hence the appropriateness of this theory to the study. Student Transactional Distance connotes interplay among the environment, the individual, and the patterns of behaviours in a situation (Moore 1997, p 22.) According to Moore (1997) transactional distance is pedagogical, not geographic, and necessitates "special organizations and teaching procedures". The nature of the transaction developed between students and teachers in a distance education environment is governed by the following three factors:

1. Dialogue: This refers to all forms of student-teacher interactions within the context of clearly defined educational targets, enabling the resolution of learning problems towards the achievement of intended outcomes
2. Structure: This refers to aspects of the course structure defining the extent to which prescribed goals are to be met. This includes issues of a pedagogical model in teaching and the ability of the course to accommodate student needs.
3. Learner Autonomy: This refers to the learner's sense of self-direction and self-drive in their learning. It emphasises the importance of the need for learners to develop confidence and independence by taking full responsibility for their learning.

Moore's theory of transactional distance is the most appropriate because research supervision in an ODL environment is affected by all the variables that normally affect teaching and learning transactions at a distance in line with the above three factors. Research supervision requires student and supervisor dialogue as they go through the research process. This includes even at a time engaging in some collaborative dialogue with their peers. There is also a need for establishing a properly structured supervision process to enable smooth interaction between students and supervisors. The issue of learner autonomy is also very important in research supervision because distance learning students need to have a certain level of self-motivation and self-drive as well to be able to succeed in their studies, including carrying out research. Students can not only wholly depend on the supervisor to take all the responsibility of ensuring that they work on their research projects. According to Garrison (2000), the Transactional Theory is intuitively appealing and moves the ODL field toward the realisation of pedagogical theory. Pedagogically, this study is guided by the view that constructivism is the most suitable pedagogical approach to be embraced for the supervision of research in ODL.

A constructivist approach is the most suitable pedagogical approach because students' research output contributes to the process of knowledge creation resources that they can interact with to create and share knowledge with others. Constructivism states that learning is an active, contextualised process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. Knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment. This study believes that student research output contributes to the process of knowledge creation.

## Statement of the Problem

The problem is that despite the provision of research supervision, the completion of dissertations has been very low. According to Costa (2018) generally, students in higher education find it difficult to complete their research within the specified time. This problem becomes even more pronounced in the case of distance learners, which makes it very important for proper supervision to be put in place. The relationship between the supervisor and the student determines the successful completion of the research thesis. This is so because supervisors play a very critical role in motivating and guiding students in undertaking research work (Da Costa 2016)) as cited in Zaheer and Munir (2020). Significant numbers of students fail to complete their research on time or even fail to complete their programme of study due to the incomplete dissertation. To explore this problem, the research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of students on the research supervision?
2. What are students' perceptions of the quality of the research supervision?
3. What challenges do the students experience during the supervision processes?
4. How can research supervision be enhanced to improve the completion rate?

## Methodology

The qualitative research paradigm was chosen in this study as the study focused on people's behaviour and perceptions. A qualitative approach offers the best lens through which the phenomenon of research supervision could be dissected to facilitate a description of scarce information. The approach enables the researcher to capture and produce an exhaustive description of the lived experiences of individuals concerning the phenomenon of research supervision.

## Research Design

A case study approach was found to be more appropriate and a preferred research approach because of the researcher's interest in easily collecting data from the Master's Students at BOU. Case studies are set in contexts that enable clear boundaries drawn around them. These contexts may relate to factors such as geographical location, and

organisational and institutional contexts (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). As a research design, a case study offers richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods (Chabaya, Chiome, and Chabaya 2011). In this case, the geographic setting was the School of Education and School of Business and Management Studies within the Botswana Open University.

## Ethical Measures and Trustworthiness

In the study, every effort was made to ensure with confidentiality and anonymity of the participants to safeguard their privacy. The descriptions of the participants' experiences in their supervision journey were not stored with any identifying labels, and codes were used to replace their names. In this study, the researcher had the responsibility of capturing data as accurately as possible. However, it is to be noted that the interpretation of data is never wholly objective as in most studies, researchers are part of the environment that they study. Therefore, the knowledge of the researcher may influence the interpretation of the data. Due diligence was made to minimise impartiality.

## Sampling and Data analysis

Purposive sampling was adopted to gather data from students who were in their final year of the identified programmes. Data were analysed according to the following thematic areas: students- supervisor relations, supervision models, and research support.

## Data Presentation

This section presents the data on student experiences of research supervision. It deliberates on issues emanating from the research responses from the participants. Upon analysis of the responses, the following thematic areas emerged: student-supervisor relations, supervision experience, supervision models, research support and University support.

## Student-Supervisor Relations

Participants' responses on the issue of supervisor relations indicated that intense research supervision motivates students and leads to positive results. They also observed that a good student-supervisor relationship increased commitment and encouraged students to work hard. It was observed that where the supervision relationship is not strong might lead to a slow student pass; incomplete research and student dropout of the programme. This view is supported by the students' response excerpts captured below:

### *Response E1*

“My supervisor is very good. She was there for me anytime.”

*Response E2*

“I received timely feedback.”

*Response E3*

“I was alone at Boteti but I appreciated the support I received.”

*Response E4*

“The supervision support I got was enough to see me through.”

*Response E7*

“I was happy with the assistance I was given; the supervisor was very supportive.”

*Response E8*

“A good relationship with the supervisor helps us to work through the research project”

*Response E9*

“My supervisor was patient and committed to the task throughout the supervision.”

*Response E13*

“Student progress is determined by a good relationship between the student and the supervisor.”

*Response B1*

“If the relationship between the student and the supervisor is damaged there is a high possibility that you do not do well or end up quitting.”

*Response B2*

“My supervisor is always impatient and angry with me.”

*Response B3*

“If the student and the supervisor are not working well with each other the progress of the research is delayed.”

*Response B4*

“I encountered serious problems at the start of supervision, the proposal stage.”

*Response B5*

“Too much laxity from the supervisor side leads to slow progress.”

## **Supervision experience**

The responses from the students indicated that there seemed to have been exposed to varied experiences of their supervisors. Indications were that the experience and commitment of the supervisor highly impact the motivation of the student to complete their research work, as shown by the response excerpts below:

### *Response E10*

“Intensive hard work, follow-ups from the supervisor lead to speedy progress and completion of research.”

### *Response E11*

“My supervisor always found time to read my work and advised me accordingly.”

### *Response E12*

“Quality supervision helps students to come up with quality research.”

### *Response B6*

“Supervisors should be inducted well on how to supervise.”

### *Response B7*

“I am really struggling with the research I need a lot of guidance from my supervisor, whenever I send my work he becomes angry with me on what I have written. I thought he is there to mentor

### *Response B8*

“I think my supervisor also needs supervising about my progress. He must account to someone. He must report on how he is progressing with me and state my challenges”.

### *Response B10*

“My supervisor is always busy and does not respond to the emails I sent on time.”

## **Supervision models**

This area covers issues of the approach the Supervisor adopted to provide guidance and support to students, including giving feedback timeously to students. The responses from the students showed some small but significant variation in their preferences regarding supervision models, as demonstrated by their responses. Participants provided different perceptions about their preferred models of supervision. Some preferred the traditional single supervision model while others preferred collaborative supervision, as stated in the excerpts below:



*Response E14*

"Single supervision helps to avoid contradictions between two or more supervisors supervising the same student".

*Response E15*

"One person can consistently guide you on what is expected."

*Response B13*

"Too many supervisors may create delays of completion as they may view the work differently"

*Response B14*

"Following more than one supervisor might be tedious"

*Response B15*

"People view things differently so if more than one supervisor assists in the research this would minimize errors and reduce delayed feedback"

*Response B16*

"Collaboration helps ease the supervision job and minimize the mistakes"

*Response B17*

"I prefer co-supervision because it helps with in-depth scrutinizing of mistakes and equips me with more skill."

*Response B18*

"Research is a collaborative exercise hence at some point scholars need to come together to close the gaps".

**University Support**

The University arranged regular visits to the various regions to provide academic, motivational, and psychological support to students through research clinics. This decision was based on the assumption that organising face-to-face research support activities would contribute positively to students' motivation. The impact of these was indicated to have been very valuable by students, resulting in significant encouragement of the students to complete their studies. This approach is supported by Butcher and Sieminski (2006), who are of the view that face-to-face interaction between students and the teacher is vital for the motivation, confidence, and knowledge enhancement of the supervisee. Furthermore, distance supervision sometimes becomes passive due to a lack of face-to-face interaction, causing dissatisfaction among the students that becomes

the biggest challenge for the supervisors (MacKeogh 2006). This is evident from the students' comments presented in the excerpts below.

*Response E5*

“Motivational talks from the university helped me.”

*Response E6*

“Regional consultation visits and face-to-face meetings to check our progress were valuable for me.”

**Supervision Models**

Participants provided different perceptions about their preferred models of supervision. Some preferred the traditional single supervision model while others preferred collaborative supervision. In their comments, they stated that:

*Response E14*

"Single supervision helps to avoid contradictions between two or more supervisors supervising the same student".

*Response E15*

“One person can consistently guide you on what is expected.”

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“Following more than one supervisor might be tedious”

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“People view things differently so if more than one supervisor assists in the research this would minimize errors and reduce delayed feedback”

*Response B16*

“Collaboration helps ease the supervision job and minimize the mistakes”

*Response B17*

“I prefer co-supervision because it helps with in-depth scrutinizing of mistakes and equips me with more skill.”

*Response B18*

“Research is a collaborative exercise hence at some point scholars need to come together to close the gaps”.

**Student Personal Challenges**

Some participants cited personal challenges as interfering with the support they were provided by their supervisors. Participants indicated that they encountered personal and as well as work-related challenges during their research supervision. They had difficulty balancing competing demands and responsibilities. Developing relationships with supervisors as distant students where interaction is entirely technology-mediated hindered supervision progress. Below are excerpts from the participants:

*Response B9*

“I experienced delays in finalising the proposal in order to secure the permit from the ministry.”

*Response B11*

“It looks like we depend entirely on online supervision but I would have preferred face-to-face interactions.”

*Response B12*

“I am unable to meet physically with my supervisor because of the challenges of distance.”

*Response B13*

“I want to believe that my own personal challenges especially my job schedule hindered me from using the full support of my supervisor”

**Findings and Discussion**

The findings revealed that generally were major differences in the experiences of participants. The Education (MEDEL) students seemed to have had a relatively positive experience with their research supervision, while those at the Business school (CEMBA/CEMPA) indicated having had a challenging experience with their research. However, overall, the views and opinions of participants fall into the three thematic areas; research support, student supervisor relation, and supervision models. Data further indicated that both students and supervisors have expectations that they want to be met when engaged in the process of research. It is important to define the parameters of supervision, as this aligns the research outcomes to the factors of Moore’s theory of Transactional Distance (Moore 1991), which outline the importance of the structure factor. The presence of structure will facilitate an easier dialogue, which is critical for the back-and-forth communication between the supervisor and student. The presence of

these two factors helps with building up confidence in the student, which will lead to more self-direction and motivation needed by the student to take control of their learning. According to Delgaty (2018), the genesis of self-directed learning can be attributed to the creation of the conditions that encourage individuals to exercise initiative, reflection and choice. Students must reach this level of thinking when working on research to be able to take control of their research activities.

## **Research Support**

Many students indicated that they had quality support from their supervisors who were patient and committed to the supervision. They valued this as evidenced by one respondent who said that “quality supervision helps students to come up with quality research” and another who said, “student progress is determined by a good relationship between the student and the supervisor”. These student experiences are in tandem with existing literature, which posits that the completion rate and the quality of research output can be increased by the processes associated with thesis organisation, which includes factors such as student-supervisor interaction (Zaheer and Munir 2020). It is worth noting that the aspect of the organisation is a very critical factor of Moore’s theory, as outlined in the theoretical framework. However, there were those whose experiences were not that smooth as there were some who indicated that their supervisor was “angry and impatient with them”. Others indicated bad relationships between themselves and the supervisors with supervisors “showing signs of laxity and non-seriousness with their work”. They believed that it is necessary to have supervisors also being supervised as one of them indicated that “supervisors should be inducted well on how to supervise” to prevent the possibility of the student not doing well and ending up quitting their studies. However, according to research conducted by Grant, Hackney and Edgar (2014), there was some evidence that indicated that there was a need to manage student expectations, as well as those of the supervisor, to create a conducive environment to prevent any misunderstandings. One participant felt that supervisors ought to account for student progress, “I think my supervisor also needs supervising about my progress. He must account to someone. He must report on how he is progressing with me and state my challenges”. One participant mentioned that if the student and supervisor are not working well, the progress of the research is delayed.

During graduate supervision, schools and departments must set a support structure that would make supervisors account for the student’s progress. Since BOU is an open and distance learning institution, research supervisors should be employed based on the throughput of the supervisors. The students expect supervisors to support them using academic expertise in a particular area of research. Lack of support for students was expressed when it was stated that some supervisors were not approachable and hostile to their students. Students believed that whether their work was good or bad, they ought to be supported. The students’ comments also point to the issue of the power dynamic between the supervisor and the students. Some participants seemed to be intimidated and let down, as supervisors seemed not to interact well with them. The study notes that it is important that supervisors impart the necessary expertise to students professionally.

Supervisors are perceived as gatekeepers to the qualification and the academic discipline that students seek to attain.

### **Student-supervisor relations**

Data on student-supervisor relations suggested that supervisors should take cognisance of students' expectations to try and fulfil them. They should also recognise the implicit role of being role models to the students they supervise and that as role models, they could contribute to the retention and attrition rate of the research students. It has also become apparent that meaningful supervision could only be attained through meticulous planning, scheduling of research processes and meetings. Students expect the supervisor to create a conducive environment in which targets are set and agreements are reached. It is, therefore, necessary that during supervision tangible contracts with students are signed, and supervision guidelines availed for this environment to prevail. As literature revealed, regularly scheduled meetings between students and supervisors are critical. They provide avenues for setting out clear expectations about the work to be undertaken. Schools and departments should foster structured processes that could be followed to avoid attrition during graduate research supervision. These may take the form of progress reports outlining the student milestones and schedules for completion. A conducive environment for research entails even documenting information that explains the research process.

In the study, interpersonal relations featured prominently in the discussions as students expected supervisors to provide academic expertise, and management of personal and professional relations. Making a point in this regard, Salmon (1992) emphasised the humane aspect of supervision where the supervisor should offer students personal support. (Moses, 1995) adds that there should be mutual respect between the supervisor and the student engaged in research. The need for good rapport is highlighted in the study as students discussed the attributes that supervisors ought to have guided and counselled them toward completion of the supervision. They entailed virtues such as patience, commitment, and hard handwork. Those students who claim to have had good experiences of supervision described the experience as an “awesome, splendid, excellent and wonderful journey.”

### **Supervision Models**

The participants indicated that their preferred models of research supervision ranged from single supervision and co-supervision supervision. They also provided reasons for their preferred supervision models. Participants who indicated that they thrive better on the single supervision model stated that it reduced conflicting feedback that can delay research progress. They further observed that they enjoyed undivided attention and support from the supervisor. This view is supported by Nordentoft, Thomsen, and Wichmann-Hansen (2012), who have argued that both students and supervisors are used to a one-on-one supervisory relationship and are not prepared for different modes of participation and learning.

On the contrary, participants who preferred co-supervision argued that research needs different viewpoints hence the importance of teamwork. They stated that the benefits derived from this model of supervision surpassed those of the single supervision model. Observation in the ODL context has revealed that learning from peers and groups is greatly valued hence the co-supervision could resonate well with some participants. The views expressed by the students concur with Nordentoft, et al (2012) who argued about collective academic supervision as providing a framework for the supervision and offering students systematic, progressive and academic input from peers and supervisors. The study also revealed that participants felt that through research supervision, they experienced professional growth and improved their social skills. The narratives below state:

*Response B19*

“The master’s research supervision has taught me new skills. I have learned to work with people. I learnt how to communicate with different people. I learnt that to be a scholar, it calls for commitment and endurance.”

*Response B 20*

" During supervision, technology made it easy to contact other students whenever you need help through WhatsApp; email; mobile phone and they were always ready to assist”.

This statement corroborates the view that distance learners work as teams to promote success in their studies. As a result the graduate research supervision could exploit this soft skill to improve supervision.

## Conclusion

This paper, in conclusion, provides insights into what students perceive as good supervision and how the research supervision could be improved at BOU. It is hoped that these insights will help departments and schools to reflect upon their professional practice to better provide effective research support to the students. The paper further unpacks the issues of what could be enabling effective postgraduate level research supervision. The study revealed the need for a well-structured research supervision process. It is suggested that the supervision process could entail prompt feedback, and regular supervision meetings in terms of BOU. This could be attained through maximum use of the Moodle platform as all the programmes are technology-mediated. Action sets and small group supervision meetings can be beneficial in allowing students to share both problems and solutions and in building their confidence. Other strategies that this study recommends entails the development of regular progress reports and research plans to provide direction of supervision. The research contracts have been viewed as capable of improving supervision too. This study also considers students’ research guides as critical in providing clear guidance on the roles of both the student and

supervisor and the expected input of the two parties. Evidence in the supervision literature suggests that supervisors become supervisors without any formal training. They tend to draw many forms of their own supervisory experiences as graduate students (Halse 2011), hence the need for structured supervision training. Furthermore, there is a need to note and acknowledge that supervision is about a continual exchange of ideas and supervisors should refrain from looking down upon students, but rather treat them like junior colleagues eager to learn research (Grant, Hackney and Edgar 2014). This is also in line with the concept of Dialogue espoused in Moore's theory of Transactional Distance as stated in the Theoretical Framework. Once there is dialogue and structure, it will then be easy for the promotion of student autonomy to be realised for students to eventually be motivated and ready to self-direct their research initiatives with the need for less driving by the supervisor. This will result in a healthier relationship between the supervisor and the student. This view is supported by Grant, Hackney, and Edgar (2014), who argue that the core of research support lies in the relationship between the student and the supervisor. This is the key that facilitates effective supervision and helps to promote a good learning experience for the student.

## Recommendations

Since BOU does not offer a formal training program for inducting supervisors, this study recommends that the university should explore the possibility of creating an online course that would improve supervisory skills for research supervisors. The course could be made a pre-requisite for research supervision. The e-learning platform available at the university could be used to offer a compulsory structured prerequisite research supervision course for BOU graduate research supervisors. A transparent supervision process could be conducted on the portal that could even enable the heads of departments and Deans of schools to view the progress of the graduate students. It further recommended that BOU could consider employing supervisors based on the research throughput to reduce the non-completion rate of graduate research. The university could conduct further research to explore the value of peer group supervision and, if necessary, argue the prevailing one-to-one traditional supervisory model. Continuous evaluation and improvement of graduate supervision in the institution are therefore desired. Lastly, the University should consider increasing its face-to-face support interventions to support research students. This is supported by Butcher and Sieminski (2006) as cited in Zaheer and Munir (2020) who posit that face-to-face interaction between student and teacher is vital for motivation, confidence building, and knowledge enhancement of supervisee and distance supervision sometimes becomes passive due to lack of face-to-face interaction.

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