

## **Research Supervision at a Private University in Lahore: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Students' Lived Experiences**

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### **Abstract**

*This study explores research students' perspectives on research supervision, employing phenomenological methods and collecting data through homogenous sampling, and interviewing research students who had been working on their research work for more than six months. The study was restricted to four research students in an education department at a private university in Lahore due to time and resource limitations. By using a semi-structured interview guide and telephonic calls, students' responses were recorded. All participants provided rich data about the approaches to supervision. The analysis of the data revealed that most of the supervisors were using different approaches to supervision and provided support for project management, attaining resources, and directing the supervisors toward their tasks under appropriate guidance. Most research students also reported that their supervisors helped them in locating resources, updated them regarding conferences, critically evaluated their work through cross-questioning, and provided them with timely and appropriate feedback to elevate their expertise level. Few research students gave responses regarding the non-availability of feedback as they asserted that their supervisor is not approachable, and they blamed them for their less interaction.*

**Keywords:** Postgraduate Students, Research Supervision, Lived Experiences, Research Practices  
**Introduction**

In Pakistan, the number of universities has increased, but it is leading to some serious questions related to the quality of teaching and research (Siddiqui, 2019). Postgraduate degrees, higher education, and research all come up with serious issues that are related to the provision of quality supervision to postgraduate students. The interest and engagement in research in university education depend upon the research supervision (Vereijken, Rijst, Driel, & Dekker, 2017). Postgraduate students are needed to be trained in such a way so that they can work independently and pragmatically; it all depends upon the quality of supervision (Ali, Ullah, & Sanauddin, 2019). In addition to classroom teaching and other aspects of higher education, academics at the global level have been continuously debating the quality of postgraduate research supervision and the factors influencing them (Lee, 2013). In Pakistan, the improvement of research work is a debatable topic; however, the current status of the trends of postgraduate research supervision has received very little attention (Siddiqui, 2019).

Higher education transformation and improvement have always been on the agenda since Pakistan came into being (Siddiqui, 2016). If we look into the reforms of Higher Education in 2002, the University Grant Commission (UGC) upgraded, and it is considered one of the biggest steps toward the improvement of Higher Education. A new era of Higher education opened up with this one step, and it led to new achievement stories of higher education in Pakistan. The 2002 Act is known as a revolutionary act in the higher education sector, and HEC initiated a lot to facilitate research and higher education. Under Act 2002, HEC not only improved the number of universities but also worked on research productivity. Subsequently, HEC initiated all the necessary steps toward research-based projects. It also started a systematic five-year plan and aimed to provide quality education at the

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postgraduate level. Along with all other targets, HEC took research and quality teaching as a priority plan and made major efforts to address three key challenges: (a) Quality assurance, (b) Increased access, and (c) Relevance of higher education to the country's needs.

HEC also introduced relevant departments like the Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) and the Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) to improve the quality of education at a higher level. ORIC was announced as a compulsory department for the universities as the aim of such a department is to transform the universities into research-based universities, where the focus is on promoting quality research programs and taking the initiative for innovation for national development. HEC also initiated for Research and Development Program, through which new programs such as Research Publications, Presentation Programs, Research Grant Programs, and Supervision Policy.

HEC provides effective measures regarding the supervision policy and limits the number of supervisees. The recommended number of supervisees that a supervisor can deal with should not exceed 12 (5 Ph.D. and 7 MS/MPhil students). HEC limited the number of students so that a supervisor could get enough time to provide "quality" supervision to the students. Besides all that, to ensure research quality, HEC provides chances for the faculty to receive training for supervision from the developed universities of the world and enables the research students of the country to develop their research skills. HEC also makes some restrictions due to which the supervisors are needed to be involved in the research projects and work for the publications in national and international Journals (HEC approved). It compelled the supervisors to continue their passion for research and update novice researchers as per the demand of the new era. HEC is striving and putting efforts into quality research work, and this contextual analysis will help us to understand that postgraduate studies under HEC are providing enough facilities for novice researchers to grow in this field. Siddle (2001) states that the supervisors are there to provide guidelines and opportunities for the students to grow. It is a key feature of any university to provide opportunities and equip students with the best research skills (Ali et al., 2019).

This study explores the process of supervision through the point of view of supervisees regarding their research experiences because the process of quality research requires quality supervision. This study is designed to explore the experiences of research students related to research supervision at a private university in Lahore, Pakistan.

### **Research Studies Conducted in the Pakistani Context**

In Pakistan, this topic is getting the attention of researchers. This section will review and share the findings of some of the studies conducted in the Pakistani context over a period of time to explore this notion and its current situation in Pakistan. A review of some latest studies is presented below:

A study by Saleem and Mahmood (2017) investigated the influence of various supervision-related background variables on the supervisees' supervision experiences through their study at the postgraduate level. Saleem and Mahmood (2017) focused on the supervision experiences of the supervisees and the mismatch between the specialization areas of the supervisor and supervisee, the procedure of allotment of supervisors, and differences in study discipline regarding supervision experiences (Saleem & Mahmood, 2017). The findings of the study highlighted the need for the expertise and research skills of supervisors in the field of research. The study also pointed out the importance of the choice of supervisor for the research study as they found that those research students, who were not given the choice of selecting their supervisor, faced a lot of issues while doing their studies, and it had a negative impact on supervision experiences as well. The study also highlighted the workload problems of supervisors of the social sciences department. Saleem and Mahmood (2017) found that there was a match between the supervisor's research expertise and the topic of the research study opted by a supervisee as the most significant supervision-related variable that influences the supervision process. The findings of the study suggested supervisory training in specific disciplines, alignment between the supervisor's specialized area and the supervisee's topic of research study, adopting better processes of supervisor's allotment, and managing workload of supervisors for making the supervisory process friendly and up to the mark.

In another study, Saleem and Mehmood (2018) pointed out that supervisors can make their supervision process more helpful if they closely examine the nature of help, as per the supervisee's requirement, and respond in time to the issues at different research stages. They argued that

mismanagement during the process of supervision could create dissatisfaction between supervisors and supervisees (Saleem & Mehmood, 2018).

Riffat and Muhammad (2019) conducted a qualitative case study to develop an understanding of the research students' perspective on the support needed to be provided by the supervisors during the process of supervision. The researchers took the supervisory support framework of Lee (2008) as a model based on five approaches to supervision (Functional, Enculturation, Critical Thinking, Emancipation, and relationship development. They all reported that their supervisors provided good support related to directing, research planning, helping them in getting resources, and project management. The researchers highlighted that most of the supervisees reported that their supervisors not only helped them to introduce them to the disciplinary community but also provided the sources for the study and motivated them to participate in professional workshops and seminars. Some of them discussed the negative behavior of supervisors in this regard and that they never motivated the students to participate in this type of activity. They all stated that supervisors enabled them to evaluate their work critically according to the literature related to their work. Some students did not find the emancipation approach a workable approach, as their experiences were non-friendly. For managing the supervision processes, supervisors used five approaches but gave unequal importance to each approach, and along with that, they helped the supervises in project management but not providing support related to evaluation, argument analysis, and emotional intelligence (Riffat & Muhammad, 2019).

Zafar, Muhammad, and Anis (2021) conducted a qualitative case study to develop an understanding of the supervisors' beliefs and practices related to supervisory support provided to postgraduate research students. Findings underscored that the knowledge and beliefs of supervisors were closely related to the five conceptions of supervisory support; however, all supervisors were not using all the approaches to supervision equally.

### Theoretical Framework

The study has adopted the theoretical framework presented by Lee (2008, 2019). Lee (2008) identifies these five main approaches to supervision. These approaches are dependent on each other. The functional approach to supervision entails project management and direction toward the ultimate target, whereas the enculturation approach demands the student is stimulated and encouraged as the owner of his work and tasks. The critical thinking approach entails giving liberty to question and analyze his/ her own work, and the emancipation approach demands to develop the personality of the student in such a way that s/he is encouraged to ask a question. Developing a quality relationship approach requires the student to feel bonded, inspired, and enthusiastic (Gube, Getenet, Satariyan, & Muhammad, 2017; Satariyan, Getenet, Gube, & Muhammad, 2015). The framework for concepts of research supervision is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Theoretical Framework Guiding the Study

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical thinking	Emancipation	Relationship development
Supervisor's Activity	Rational progression through tasks	Gatekeeping	Evaluation, Challenge	Mentoring, supporting constructivism	Supervising by experience, developing a relationship
Supervisor's knowledge and skills	Directing, project management	Diagnosis of deficiencies, coaching	Argument, Analysis	Facilitation, Reflection	Emotional intelligence
Possible student Reaction	Obedience Organized	Role Modeling	Constant inquiry, fight or flight	Personal growth, Reframing	Emotional intelligence

### Purpose and Research Questions of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of research students regarding the process of research supervision. Accordingly, this study is undertaken in Pakistan to analytically view the lived experiences of the postgraduate researchers and their supervision. Furthermore, it has documented the importance of supervision between the supervisor and supervisee. The researcher recognized the importance of the relationship between the supervisee and supervisor. To undertake this study, the thesis presented data from a qualitative purposive sampling of 4 interviews with the research students at a private university in Lahore, Pakistan. Data were collected through an interview

guide. Due to limited access and source, data was collected from the social sciences department's private university.

### **Methods and Materials**

The current study is a qualitative study using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research design (J.A. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022). IPA investigates how individuals perceive their life experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The goals of the IPA methodology were deemed to be aligned with the research questions since this design does not require a large number of participants as it is based on an individual's perception of life. This design was used because it helps to develop a complex and nuanced understanding of participants' interaction with the phenomenon being studied (Tahira, Muhammad, & Masood, 2020). This type of research provides a detailed personal view of an individual through the generic experiential themes that are typical and supposed to be paired with the researcher's own interpretation as well.

### **Research Sites, Sampling, and Participants**

The participants were students at a private university in Lahore, as due to time and resources restriction, it was not possible to travel and collect data from some other universities. A purposeful homogeneous sampling technique was used to select the participants. This technique is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (J.A. Smith et al., 2022).

### **Participant Inclusion Criteria**

The following criteria were used to decide the inclusion of participants in this study:

- (1) The participants had the experience of coordination with the supervisors for at least six months so that they could provide good feedback regarding the supervisory processes
- (2) The selected participants were from the Education Department.
- (3) The selected participants were cooperative enough to provide the required and truthful data.

As a result, the sample consisted of 4 female research students enrolled in the M. Phil Educational Leadership and Management Program in the Department of Education.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data for this study. Usually, in an IPA study, semi-structured interviews are the most frequently adopted option to collect data (Diana, Muhammad, & Raauf, 2022; Naveed, Muhammad, & Siddiqui, 2022) as this method is based on face-to-face interaction where during dialogue the researcher adds questions in a pre-planned interview to probe information from the participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). As per the structure of the study, fewer participants and more data are expected to collect. The semi-structured interview is considered the most suitable option (Muazzam, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021; Rauf, Muhammad, & Saleem, 2021; Jonathan A Smith, 2011).

Several possible questions for the interview guide were developed based on the areas identified in the literature (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). More specifically, this study was supposed to be used to collect rich information through a smaller number of participants; therefore, the interview guide was designed according to the need of the research design.

The researcher contacted the participants through personal contacts and discussed the research process in detail so that they could get what information the researcher wanted to collect. Interviews were semi-structured in format, and participants were individually interviewed through telephonic calls as due to Covid-19, the universities were closed, and it was difficult to collect information through face-to-face interaction. With the permission of the participants, the telephone calls were recorded. In addition, the interview guide was used to take notes whenever it was deemed necessary. All interview recordings were transcribed and translated into the English language for analysis. The current study has employed interpretive phenomenological analysis for the analysis of interview data.

### **Findings**

This section provides findings of interviews with four research students who were conducting their research studies in the Department of Education at a private university in Lahore under their supervisors, which were allocated to them for the completion of their final thesis. Analysis of the data provided their lived experiences in detail, which helped in identifying the supervisory process happening in that department.

### ***Perspectives on the functional Approach to research supervision***

Some of the participants of the study clearly demonstrated that the topics on which they were working were modified by their supervisors as one of the participants stated, *"I selected the topic, but she helped me to finalize the methodology. I wanted to work through a qualitative study because I am not at all good at quantitative, but she said that we would go with mixed-methods research because the qualitative study does not provide authentic data"* (Participant 3). Findings also show that some supervisors only guided the supervisees regarding the topics. They have not imposed their own selection on their supervisees and helped them shape up their selection.

Results also showed some of the participants were not aware of supervisors' contribution to supervisees' area of research. They were aware of contributions in the field of education, but still, they shared less information about the achievements of the supervisors. One of the participants stated, *"I am not sure about this thing whether my supervisor had done any research on this topic. I never asked him"* (Participant 2). On the other hand, another participant asserted a different view and stated, *"Yes, he was familiar with ideas, and he helped me a lot. He also referred me to some articles which he probably knew because of his previous research. He shared that with me and asked me to use them in my research, so our areas of research are similar"* (Participant 2).

It is evident through the results that almost all of the participants chose their supervisors due to their high expertise. They chose them because of their fame as an excellent supervisor. One participant clearly discusses that it was already in her mind that she would work with him, *"I also had the idea that there are supervisors who never ask the supervisees about their work status, but about my current supervisor, the comments were different, so I had in my mind that I will work with him"* (Participant 2). One more participant asserted, *"Although different teachers taught me various courses, personally, I feel that she provided me such a deep insight into the leadership topic. So, that was the reason I was impressed and selected her as my supervisor"* (Participant 3).

Interaction with the supervisor is very important for the successful completion of the research project. The easy access approach can help supervisees to share research-related issues easily. Some of the participants reported that their supervisors always kept in touch with students through different mediums. As one participant asserted, *"Oh yes, if, during the week, I had to interact with him, I was permitted to call or text him."* She also said, *"we were also in touch via WhatsApp and through Email as well. So, it was not at all difficult for me to approach him in university and by these sources as well"* (Participant 1). On the other hand, some participants showed anxiety because they were not able to contact their supervisor directly. Participant 3 said, *"I think I always tried to give my supervisor a wake-up call, as I have told you that it is the only issue that we can't approach her easily"* (Participant 3).

All participants were aware of the expertise level of their supervisors. They know that their supervisors had the experience of publishing articles locally and abroad as well. They all are declared amazing teachers by their supervisees. One of the participants clearly asserts, *"O, yes! I know about him, and he is a very experienced person. His expertise level is very high. After all, he is a Ph.D. qualified person and has been teaching at university for a very long time"* (Participant 1). One more participant has the same opinion, *"She has a good amount of knowledge and grip on quantitative and qualitative methods of research"* (Participant 3).

The responses of the participants also revealed that two of them were very satisfied with the amount of guidance they were getting, *"He used to guide so well that I can't say that there could be another way because I was happy with the way he guided me"* (Participant 1). But one was feeling hesitant to answer this question as the amount of guidance was not satisfactory for her because she was not in touch and directed with their supervisors. She had to make appointments for meetings and get feedback: *"Actually, I want to be guided more. I am good in studies, but it doesn't mean that I am equally good in research"* (Participant 3). One more participant affirms, *"I have a lot of questions in my mind, and I want their answers, but as we do not interact much, that is why many questions are still unanswered, and I do not know what to do with my study"* (Participant 4).

### ***Perspectives on the enculturation approach to research supervision***

It is very important for the research student to get a good amount of professional and social skills as this knowledge can help them throughout their research and academic journey (Lee, 2010). Two participants stated that their supervisors provided them with all the necessary guidance regarding this, *"he properly guided me on how to write a thesis and shared with me international articles related to*

*my thesis*” (Participant 3). They provided them with thesis templates, articles, guidance regarding methodology, data analysis, and references, but two of the participants asserted that they were not being facilitated properly. Whatever they are doing, they are managing on their own as, after topic selection and basic discussion, they tried to contact their supervisors, but she was not in touch due to university closure, and they were not permitted to call or directly contact her, “No, it never happened, she has not guided me about that yet, whatever I have done, that is my own effort, I showed her some articles, and she said those were fine, nothing else happened” (Participant 4). They are hopeful that things will get improved with the passage of time. As per the enculturation approach of supervision, the supervisor is expected to act as a mentor and facilitator who introduces an organized approach to writing and makes the supervisees able to adapt it for their research, not only guidance but also to the point and up to the mark discussions with supervisors can contribute a lot in the life of a newborn researcher and help him/her to own the work (Lee, 2007).

Participants also asserted the research publications of their supervisors, and all were not sure about it. All of them knew their supervisors were experienced, so they believed that they must have publications in their research area but were not sure about that, “I am sorry I don’t know much about my supervisor, but yes, his research areas were similar to mine, and in research, they must have publications” (Participant 1). One more participant declared, “He explained my topic of reflective practices so well, and he has a really strong command over qualitative research, so I think he has worked with my topic” (Participant 2).

Research conferences play a vital role in the development of supervisees as a researcher. The participants of the study declared that their supervisors not only participated in conferences but also encouraged them to take part actively in those kinds of activities, “He always motivated us to participate as that it is important for our growth as a researcher” (Participant 1). One more participant declared, “Yes, she does. She told us that she met many good researchers during her visits to different conferences. She is also one of the active organizers, and she organizes many conferences in our department” (Participant 3).

Research students were not aware of their supervisors’ work in research areas and publications. Supervisors must understand that their supervisees should know about their contributions to the field of research, and on the other hand, supervisees must show curiosity about it as it can help them in making decisions for topic selection and supervisory practices. One of the participants emphasized, “He explained my topic of reflective practices so well, and he has a really strong command over qualitative research, so I think he has worked with my topic” (Participant 1). She also stated that he has a strong grip on that, so she highlighted that it’s one of the reasons that he was familiar with the topic, but his publications in that specific area were not known to her.

#### ***Perspectives on the critical thinking approach to supervision***

Lee (2007) calls it “a heart of supervision.” Supervisees show different opinions about this phenomenon, as most of the supervisors have their own styles of feedback. All participants openly commented about their routines of supervisory meetings and feedback, as some used to discuss that weekly, in writing or verbally, and some used to share it after a long time. Most of them were satisfied with the routines and considered feedback as an improvement plan. One of the participants asserted “positive advice for improvement in work” (Participant 1) and said, “Actually, we can’t say that feedback negatively. I always take it as positive feedback for improvement in my work. So, I think it was good for my research, so I accept his feedback wholeheartedly” (Participant 1). Another participant declared, “I sent my work to him through email and used to text him on WhatsApp that I have shared a file for feedback and guide me what is needed to be changed and what will be the next step to follow” (Participant 4). Effective feedback means written feedback followed by face-to-face interaction with a detailed meeting based on the response of the supervisor. Technology can also be used to omit the factor of distance as the supervisee can record the meetings and listen to the instructions and feedback time and again; therefore, it all depends upon the situation and approach of the supervisor for conveying advice (Blythe, 2019).

It is really important to keep in touch with supervisees; otherwise, they feel disappointed and lost as one participant declared, “when I discussed my first topic with her, she rejected that and moved my study to a different pattern after almost one month. I showed her some work, but she said that it was not up to the mark. So, I am still in the middle of things” (Participant 2).

Participants said that they made changes in their work as per the suggestions, and it improved their work, *“during the ending days, if I discussed problems regarding the thesis, my supervisor helped me out managing that. He used to highlight and to guide me to correct it, or sometimes he used to correct things by himself and then guided me to clarify the reason to change”* (Participant 2). One more participant claimed, *“She called me. Your topic is very vast, and it needs a rigorous literature review, so find as many articles as you can and send a literature review after completion. So, I am still working on that”* (Participant 3).

Participants stated that they received very useful feedback regarding their work, they not only incorporated desired changes, but it also helped them to become more experts in writing and analyzing their own work. They received positive feedback on their work as their supervisors were regularly guiding them, so they were becoming better in their areas of study.

#### ***Perspectives on the emancipation approach to research supervision***

Most participants reported that their supervisors helped them in shaping their study, and their supervisors provided them with guidance at the beginning of the study, provided them with templates, and helped them in choosing a theoretical framework for their study. Some supervisors assisted them in designing methodology and suggested what would suit their study more Participant 2 said, *“I conveyed to her problem that I am not comfortable with quantitative research, but when Ma’am explained that it is a more authentic way of research, I accepted that and felt that she was explaining the things for my benefit”* (Participant 3).

Participants reported that the feedback they got from their supervisor helped them in polishing their skills as a researcher. They also believed that they were becoming experts in their research area and guiding other students as well, and some areas of research still needed to be explored, so they won’t stop learning, *“There can be some areas within this research methodology, which are needed to be explored, so, I am a learner, and it will take a long time to say that I am an expert.”* Another participant said, *“I believe that I am good at qualitative but not comfortable with quantitative, so I think that there is still a lot to learn”* (Participant 3).

All the participants provided interesting perceptions about what they got from their supervisor’s expertise. As Blythe (2019) articulated that effective supervision is not only about providing knowledge, but it also involves much more like recognition of the supervisee as an individual researcher, the motivation of self-direct learning, and openness to share thoughts and ideas. One of the participants asserts, *“I think he converted me into a good researcher. That is the most important and big thing for me”* (Participant 1). Another participant stated, *“I am going to be a researcher who will produce a study with mixed methods, so the credit will go to her”* (Participant 3). All participants felt that they had learned many new things under the supervision of their supervisors, *“I came to know about new things as in my research I have learned a lot related to my subject matter and most importantly my personality is completely changed now as a researcher and that is all because of him”* (Participant 2). However, one research student desired to have more attention from their supervisors; as one of the participants’ mentioned, *“I don’t remember much, but yes, when I chose my first topic, she rejected that, and then she never asked me to submit my work, but when I used to visit her office, she discussed very little about work status, so, up till now I couldn’t get any useful feedback”* (Participant 3).

#### ***Perspectives on the relationship development approach***

A good relationship between supervisor and supervisee can lead to a successful research journey. Taking care of common values, giving respect to each other, and agreeing upon some expectations are some important requirements for successful relationships (Lee, 2018). All participants advocated this phenomenon and declared it an important part of research supervision. One of the participants asserts, *“we have a very professional relationship, but at the same time, she is friendly, and sometimes we have a cup of tea together in her office”* (Participant 3). Two students stated that the responsibility of good relations lies on the shoulders of supervisors and supervisees, *“maintaining a good relationship is the responsibility of both parties”* (Participant 1 & Participant 2), but they all said that they enjoy a friendly and professional relationship with their supervisors. They considered respect as part and parcel of a good relationship, where they felt at ease to communicate their issues confidently, *“I felt satisfied because my supervisor never insulted me. He supports me every time during my work”* (Participant 2).

All participants of the study perceived that they never wanted to face conflicting situations with their supervisors because their supervisors were more experienced. Participants stated that they liked to avoid that type of situation because their supervisors were blunt, and they felt hesitant to discuss issues with them. On the other hand, the same participant admired her, *“She is not at all a bad person, sometimes she is very friendly, but sometimes, not every time, I feel a little bit hesitant in discussing things with her because she is an outspoken person”* (Participant 3).

### **Discussion & Conclusion of the Study**

This qualitative study reinforces the assertion that supervisees’ perceptions of supervisors during the processes of supervisory are very high and demanding. It is also evident that supervisors used five approaches for supervision in different ways but with unequal weightage. Moreover, most of the supervisors were helpful and used all approaches, as they had meetings regularly, gave a wake-up call to their supervisees, updated them for conferences, and were ready to help all the time in the shape of providing maximum support to their supervisees. Supervisees were satisfied, motivated, and ready to accept the challenges of research. The perception regarding the supervisory process of these supervisees was positive as they felt that the guidance of supervisors had changed their personalities as a researcher, as their supervisors were developing their skills through cross-examining their ideas, showing trust in their abilities, argument analysis, updating their knowledge through conferences, and providing them support through constructive feedback.

It is also argued that some supervisors were not available for supervisory support, and they were not directly in touch with their supervisors, and this attitude demotivated their supervisees, and they felt lost and disheartened. Supervisors must understand that supervisees chose them with very high expectations and made decisions due to their previous positive interactions with them. If they are unable to complete their thesis in time, it will affect the supervisors’ overall performance.

The study also points out that supervisors should provide information related to seminars to the participants as they think that it is an important way to understand the professional practices of the researchers. Supervisees can learn a lot from their interaction with experienced researchers. Moreover, supervisees highly appreciated the expertise level of their supervisors, and they all seemed impressed by their proficiency in research work. Supervisors’ guidance is very important at every step of research, and they must know and follow the international standards of supervision.

Supervisees also showed their expectations toward their supervisors regarding the relationship. It is a very common phenomenon that supervisees will need guidance during the process of supervision, but if the supervisor is cooperative and helpful, discussion of the tasks and challenges will be easy. On the other hand, if the supervisor is strict and moody, supervisees will feel hesitant and will not discuss or argue even about the right thing. Supervisors should give importance to forging a good relationship with the supervisees as most of the participants consider it the responsibility of both parties.

In this new era, it is really important to understand that even experienced and knowledgeable supervisors are required to be updated both academically and with the requirements of the workplace (Lee, 2010, 2011). They must know when and where to find the latest protocols and procedures that will help them in managing their candidates (Lee, 2018). It is hoped that the participants’ detailed descriptions in this study will provide guidance to the supervisees and supervisors for their future interactions, as this study is based on the current scenario and shows deep information regarding this phenomenon.

### **Implications of Research**

#### ***Recommendations for policy and practice***

Based on the findings of the current research study, the following recommendations for policy and practice are made:

- (1) This study has revealed an area of research in which a lot of international studies are done, but in the Pakistani context, very less research is available.
- (2) It is recommended that the university must investigate the concerns of the supervisees who felt not properly supervised and face fear due to the non-attentive behavior of the supervisors.
- (3) This study also raises questions about the management issues of the supervisees as well, where they are blaming the supervisors due to fewer interactions and their busy schedules. Therefore, it is recommended that the university administration should make some policies



for the supervisees who are just not completing their tasks and thesis in time, and slots are not available for deserving students.

### **Suggestions for future research**

Several avenues for future research studies are suggested below:

- (1) Many areas of relevance to this study remained uncovered as this study is limited to one university and one department (Department of Education), so there are areas that can be explored through working with some other universities and departments. This can provide more deep information about the said phenomenon and add new information to the current study.
- (2) Future researchers can broaden current knowledge by exploring a study based on the perceptions of supervisors rather than supervisees and uncover the other side of the story.
- (3) Future researchers can expand the current study by using any other supervision-related framework which can add information to this study as well.
- (4) This study is designed in a way where few participants are involved due to time and resource limitations. Therefore, future studies can explore the phenomenon through a greater number of participants.
- (5) The use of semi-structured interviews was useful in gaining insights into the current circumstances of the study. However, future studies may consider other methods like surveys or observations to collect data.

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